The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium

Marian Narratives in Texts and Images

Edited by
Thomas Arentzen and Mary B. Cunningham

The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium

This book explores how the Virgin Mary's life is told in hymns, sermons, icons, art and other media in the Byzantine Empire before AD 1204. A group of international specialists examines material and textual evidence from both Byzantine and Muslim-ruled territories and seeks to explain why Byzantine artisans and writers chose to tell stories about Mary, the Mother of God, in such different ways. Sometimes the variation reflected the theological or narrative purposes of story-tellers; sometimes it expressed their personal spiritual preoccupations. Above all, the variety of aspects that this holy figure assumed in Byzantium reveals her paradoxical theological position as meeting-place and mediator between the divine and created realms. Narrative, whether 'historical', theological or purely literary, thus played a fundamental role in the development of the Marian cult from late antiquity onward.

THOMAS ARENTZEN is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo and currently a Fellow in Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington, DC. He earned his habilitation in Church History at Lund University in 2018. He has published books and articles in the fields of Marian Studies, Byzantine homiletics and hymnography as well as Eastern Christianity. His publications include *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist* (2017).

MARY B. CUNNINGHAM is Honorary Associate Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Nottingham. She has published books and articles in the fields of Byzantine hagiography, homiletics and theology. Her collection of translations of twelve eighth-century Marian homilies, titled *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (2008), along with her co-edited book (with Leslie Brubaker), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (2011), reflect her ongoing research on Byzantine veneration of the Virgin Mary.

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Contributors

THOMAS ARENTZEN is Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Oslo and currently a Fellow in Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC. He earned his habilitation in Church History at Lund University in 2018. He has published books and articles in the fields of Marian Studies, Byzantine hymnography and homiletics, as well as Eastern Christianity. His publications include *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist* (2017).

LESLIE BRUBAKER is Professor of Byzantine Art and Director of the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman, and Modern Greek Studies at the University of Birmingham. She has published numerous books and articles in the fields of Byzantine art, Gender Studies, and iconoclasm, including (with John Haldon), *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era: A History* (Cambridge, 2011).

FR MAXIMOS CONSTAS is the Senior Research Scholar at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA, where he teaches Patristic and Byzantine theology. His Marian publications include *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity* (2003); 'Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the Loom of the Flesh', *JECS* 3 (1995): 169–94; and *Mother of the Light: Prayers to the Theotokos by Ephraim Graecus* (2018).

MARY B. CUNNINGHAM is Honorary Associate Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Nottingham. She has published books and articles in the fields of Byzantine hagiography, homiletics, and theology. Her collection of translations of twelve eighth-century Marian homilies, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (2008), along with her co-edited book (with Leslie Brubaker), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (2011), reflect her ongoing research on Byzantine veneration of the Virgin Mary.

FRANCESCA DELL'ACQUA, since 2005, is Assistant Professor of Medieval Art at the University of Salerno, Italy, and holds the Italian habilitation to Associate Professorship (ASN 2012). She has been Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow in the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern

Greek Studies at the University of Birmingham, England (2015–17), and is affiliated to the project 'Moving Byzantium' led by Claudia Rapp at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (2017–20). Professor Dell'Acqua has published many articles and books in the fields of early medieval Western and Byzantine art and culture, focusing especially on the relationship between texts and images. Her book, *Iconophilia. Religion, Politics, and Sacred Images in Italy c. 680–880*, is forthcoming.

MARIA EVANGELATOU is Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art and Visual Culture at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where she teaches courses on ancient Greek, Byzantine and Islamic visual culture. Her research and publications focus on Byzantine illuminated manuscripts and the interrelation of word and image, theology and art, Marian iconography and gender constructs in Byzantine society.

GEORGIA FRANK is Professor of Religion at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. She works on the role of bodies, places and pictures in the ancient Christian imagination between the fourth and sixth centuries. Publications include a monograph, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (2005) and numerous articles on lay piety, pilgrimage and the hymns of Romanos the Melodist.

SUSAN ASHBROOK HARVEY is Willard Prescott and Annie McClelland Smith Professor of History and Religion at Brown University, Rhode Island. She specialises in late antique and Byzantine Christianity, with particular focus on Syriac liturgical poetry. Among her publications are books on the sixth-century bishop, John of Ephesus, and on the 'olfactory imagination' in Early Christian theological and liturgical texts, in addition to several co-edited volumes, including (with David G. Hunter), the *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (2008) and (with M. Mullett), *Knowing Bodies, Passionate Souls: Sense Perceptions in Byzantium* (2016).

FR EVGENIOS IVERITES is a member of the brotherhood of Iveron Monastery on Mt Athos. As a layman, he completed his PhD at Princeton University with a dissertation on lay piety in Byzantium during the seventh century and worked as a researcher in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Basel, Switzerland, as co-editor and translator of the fragments of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Gelasius of Caesarea (2017) and at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, MA.

ELIZABETH JEFFREYS is Emeritus Bywater and Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature at the University

of Oxford. Recent books include *Four Byzantine Novels* (2012) and (with M. Jeffreys), *Iacobi Monachi Epistolai* (2009). Professor Jeffreys has also edited numerous textbooks and volumes of collected essays in the field of Byzantine Studies.

DEREK KRUEGER, Joe Rosenthal Excellence Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, has published numerous books in the fields of Early Christian and Byzantine Studies. These include *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (2004) and *Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium* (2014)

ANDREA OLSEN LAM teaches Art History at Pepperdine University's campus in Washington, DC. She completed her doctorate at the Johns Hopkins University with a thesis titled, 'The Genesis and Transformation of the Visitation in Byzantine Art', and is co-editor of *The Eloquence of Art: Studies in Honour of Henry Maguire* (2019).

MARIA LIDOVA is a post-doctoral Junior Research Fellow at Wolfson College, Oxford, and a former member of the research team for the 'Empires of Faith' project at the British Museum. She has published articles on imagery associated with the cults of the Virgin Mary and of the saints in late antiquity and early Byzantium.

FR DAMASKINOS OLKINUORA is Lecturer of Systematic Theology and Patristics at the School of Theology of the University of Eastern Finland. He has published his doctoral thesis, *Byzantine Hymnography for the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos: An Intermedial Approach* under his lay name, Jaakko Olkinuora, as well as articles on Byzantine hymnography, homiletics, music and history of liturgy.

EIRINI PANOU studied Art and Archaeology at the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and earned her PhD in Byzantine Studies from the University of Birmingham in 2012. She is currently adjunct faculty at the Open University of Patras and Cyprus. Recent publications include a monograph, *The Cult of St Anna in Byzantium* (2018).

STEPHEN J. SHOEMAKER is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Oregon, but currently a Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute in Cambridge, MA. His recent publications include *The Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (2002), *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginning of Islam* (2011) and *The Life of the Virgin Attributed to Maximus the Confessor* (2012).

Preface

The majority of chapters in this volume were first presented as papers at the workshop 'Patristic Theology and Apocryphal Narratives in Byzantine Devotion to Mary the Mother of God', which Mary Cunningham organised during the seventeenth International Patristics Conference in Oxford (August 2015). Further chapters were commissioned for the volume from scholars who are working in this field but who were unable to attend that workshop. All of the contributors and conversation partners who have commented or discussed this project with us along the way – including Phil Booth, Kosta Simić, Christos Simelidis and Niki Tsironis – deserve our heartfelt thanks. Two anonymous readers also helped us, as editors and individual contributors, to improve the book. Moreover, we have both been fortunate enough to spend time as Fellows at Dumbarton Oaks during the time that we were editing this book. We should like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to this excellent research library, along with its Director, Trustees and Senior Fellows for these fruitful periods. We are also very grateful to Michael Sharp and Sophie Taylor, as well as the production team at Cambridge University Press, for their expert advice in the preparation of the volume for publication.

Our method in the presentation of proper names – where there exist no standard Anglicised forms – requires some explanation. We have chosen throughout the book to adopt the spellings that we deem to be most familiar to particular groups of readers. Thus the names of figures who belong to the 'patristic period' (defined here as occurring before the sixth century) retain the more usual Latinised forms: thus 'Nestorius', 'Proclus' and so on. Names that belong to figures who lived after this period and wrote in Greek follow the current spelling conventions that are used by Byzantinists: that is, they are presented in their Hellenised forms, such as 'Sophronios', 'Maximos' and others. We realise that this leads to various inconsistencies, but unfortunately this would be true of any system. We use capital letters to indicate major Dominical or Marian feast-days, such as 'Nativity' (whether of Christ or the Virgin Mary), 'Entrance' and 'Dormition'. However, when we are talking about the events themselves (whether historical or legendary), we use lower case. Individual contributors have some license to adopt their own conventions, but we have generally tried to achieve consistency in presentation throughout the volume.

Abbreviations

AB	*Analecta Bollandiana*
ACO	Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum
BHG	*Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, ed. F. Halkin (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes)
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BOR	*Biserica Ortodoxă Română*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
c.	century
ca.	circa
CANT	Corpus Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti (Turnhout: Brepols)
CArch	*Cahiers archéologiques*
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis (Turnhout: Brepols)
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca (Turnhout: Brepols)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols)
CFHB	Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae
CNRS	Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (Paris, France)
CPG	*Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, ed. M. Geerart, 5 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–83)
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, University of Salzburg (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften)
DChAE	*Deltion tes Christianikes Archaiologikes Hetaireias*
DHGE	*Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique*
DOML	Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
DOS	Dumbarton Oaks Studies
DS	*Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*
EEBS	*Epeteris Hetaireias Byzantinon Spoudon*
EO	*Échos d'Orient*
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses

GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftstellern der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
HA	*Handes Amsorya*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JAChr	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*
JSAH	*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
JWCI	*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*
LSJ	*Greek–English Lexicon*, ed. H. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones (Oxford University Press)
MGH Capit.	Monumenta Germaniae historica: Capitularia regum Francorum (Hanover: Hahn, 1883–97)
MGH Epist.	Monumenta Germaniae historica: Epistolarum, 8 vols. (Berlin, 1887–1939)
MGH SRL	Monumenta Germaniae historica: Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et italicarum saec. VI–IX (Hanover: Hahn, 1878)
MGH SRM	Monumenta Germaniae historica: Scriptores rerum merovingicarum, 7 vols. (Hannover: Hahn, 1885–1920)
MS	*Medieval Studies*
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
ODB	*Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan (Oxford University Press, 1991), 3 vols.
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. in 166 pts. (Paris, 1857–66)
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. in 222 pts. (Paris, 1944–80)
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien, im Auftrag der Patristischen Kommission der Akademien der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Heidelberg, München und der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur zu Mains, ed. K. Aland and W. Schneemelcher (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1964–)

RAChr	*Rivista di archeologia christiana*
RBén	*Revue Bénédictine*
REA	*Revue des études augustiniennes*
REB	*Revue des études byzantines*
ROC	*Revue de l'Orient chrétien*
RSBN	*Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*
SC	Sources chrétiennes (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf)
SP	Studia Patristica
SPBS	Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies (series)
ST	Studi e Testi
SVS	St Vladimir's Seminary
SVTQ	*St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, A Digital Library of Greek Literature
TM	*Travaux et mémoires*
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool University Press)
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs)
VAMZ	*Viestnik hrvatskoga arkeologičkoga družtva (Journal of the Croatian Archaeological Society)*
VetChr	*Vetera Christianorum*
VigChr	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VigChrSupp	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae

Introduction

THOMAS ARENTZEN AND MARY B. CUNNINGHAM

On a spring day in the middle of the twentieth century, the Swedish poet Gunnar Ekelöf visited the holy fountain (*hagiasma*) of the Virgin in the Blachernai church in modern Istanbul. His experiences at the famous shrine elicited a whole cycle of poems. One of them addressed the Marian icon next to the spring:

> The black image
> framed in silver worn to shreds by kisses
> Framed in silver
> the black image worn to shreds by kisses
> […]
> Darkness, O, darkness
> worn to shreds by kisses
> darkness in our eyes
> worn to shreds by kisses
> All we wished for[1]

This fragmentary modernist impression may convey aspects of the Marian image unimagined by a Byzantine viewer or painter. Ekelöf's captivation by the abyss of blackness might have puzzled a Constantinopolitan writer of *ekphrases* (rhetorical descriptions), especially since the poem eventually turns the reader's attention towards the observer. Yet in so doing, precisely, these lines highlight an important point: even in the guise of a static image, the Virgin Mary continues to inspire stories to this very day.

We live in a time of narratives – as has everyone else in history. Byzantium, too, can be described as 'a large and complex web of intersecting stories which informed the actions and perceptions of its people, even as those same people continuously retold and recast these stories for themselves'.[2]

[1] G. Ekelöf, *Selected Poems*, trans. W. H. Auden and L. Sjöberg (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 42.

[2] E. Bourbouhakis and I. Nilsson, 'Byzantine Narrative: The Form of Storytelling in Byzantium', in L. James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 263; for Byzantine narrative traditions, see now C. Messis, M. Mullett and I. Nilsson (eds.), *Storytelling in Byzantium: Narratological Approaches to Byzantine Texts and Images* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2018) and also J. Burke et al. (eds.), *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott* (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2006).

Stories are inherent to human culture. Storytelling occurs involuntarily in people's minds and in dreams. 'Narrative imagining – story – is the fundamental instrument of thought', according to the cognitive scientist Mark Turner.[3] If we accept this statement, we also realise that both listening to stories and retelling stories are vital to the way we work as humans. Ekelöf cannot look at a picture without starting to make up stories. His is not an epic, but even this little fragment of a poem comes with faltering narration. One can veritably sense how he prises out his own composition from the image – a tale of imagined kisses – as he is polishing forth a silver framing, a metallic veil on the verge of disintegration under the weight of kisses, centuries of kisses, the summoning of love and the ever-present decay on the same mirror, the black surface and the desirous first person plural, into which Ekelöf draws the reader, the encounters with the darkness hidden in the eyes of the Virgin, our lips and Byzantine beauty crumbling.

Stories bring people together. By narrating we make sense of our existence, sort and interpret the massive storm of minutiae that the world would otherwise offer a storiless mind. This explains why religious traditions typically comprise stories, myths and legends; narrative yields understanding – or, rather, it befalls as understanding. To tell is to make sense. Storytelling has a contemporaneous function, as a way to grasp life. On the other hand, it has a historical aspect to it, since most stories are new versions of older ones, revised reiterations of past knowledge. By studying historical narratives we can gain insight into how people understood their lives and how sensitivities changed.

Marian Stories

The legacy of the second-century 'apocryphal' text known as the *Protevangelium of James* in Marian storytelling can scarcely be exaggerated; one might almost argue that the history of Marian narratives amounts to a reception of the *Protevangelium*.[4] Throughout the Byzantine era, this

[3] M. Turner, *The Literary Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

[4] For this important text, see CANT 50; C. Tischendorf (ed.), *Evangelia apocrypha* (Leipzig: Avenarius and Mendelssohn, 1876), 1–50; E. de Strycker (ed.), *La forme la plus ancienne du Proévangile de Jacques*, Subsidia Hagiographica 33 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961), 64–191; J. K. Elliott (trans.), *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on M. R. James* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 57–67. We follow scholarly convention in using the term 'apocryphal' for this and other non-canonical texts that provided narratives about the Virgin's life from about the second century onward. However, it should be recognised that such texts were widely read and even used as liturgical readings, judging by the surviving manuscripts

work – which primarily tells of Mary's birth, upbringing and motherhood – continued to inspire new narratives about her in various media. This does not mean that all the icon painters and hymn writers necessarily sat down and read the *Protevangelium* themselves, but versions of it lived on in their culture, and they offered their own tweak or twist to a story that was more or less familiar. Writing to ascetic women, Athanasius (295–373) could emphasise Mary's virginity, especially during her formative years, and relate how 'she did not permit anyone near her body unless it was covered, and she controlled her anger and extinguished the wrath in her inmost thoughts'.[5] Other authors could tell of her parturition and breastfeeding in a cave. An influence from the *Protevangelium* may arguably be traced in both examples, but the writers addressed devotees with different concerns and worries. Authors and artists drew attention to the Marian aspect that was most relevant to their particular audiences. Hence studies of the *Protevangelium* and its reception also lead to the following historical questions: which aspects of older stories were privileged or received, and which aspects were left out or censored?

Mary emerged as a part of the Jesus story (not least in the Gospel of Luke) or as a prolegomenon to the same (as in the case of the *Protevangelium*) during the first Christian centuries. These two texts provided a background story for what culminated at Calvary. Yet they told nothing of what happened to the Virgin Mother later in life. Quite early, people grew interested in her final hours and manner of death, as well as in her state and whereabouts after the Dormition, or her passing away.[6]

and translations into ancient languages including Syriac, Ethiopic, Georgian, and many others. See Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 48–52; S. J. Voicu, 'Ways to Survival for the Infancy Apocrypha', in C. Clivaz, A. Dettwiler, L. Devillers and E. Norelli (eds.), *Infancy Gospels. Stories and Identities* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 401–17. For discussion of the Christian Fathers' wariness in alluding directly to such texts (at least before about the early eighth century), see M. B. Cunningham, 'The Use of the *Protevangelion of James* in Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), esp. 165–7.

[5] Athanasius of Alexandria, *First Letter to Virgins* 13–17, trans. D. Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 277–9.

[6] S. J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); S. C. Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie. Histoire des traditions anciennes* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995); see also J. Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium: Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); L. M. Peltomaa, A. Külzer and P. Allen (eds.), *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Century)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015); T. Arentzen, 'The Virgin in Hades', in G. Ekroth and I. Nilsson (eds.), *Round Trip to Hades in*

Episodes from Mary's life were elaborated in iconography and hymnography, often in relation to liturgical celebrations. Many Marian stories and themes first made their appearance alongside emerging feasts of the Virgin, and filled such occasions with narrative content. Whereas the canonical gospels furnished Dominical festivals with literary accounts, commemorations of the Mother of God could not always rely on New Testament sources. The *Protevangelium*, on the other hand, provided valuable material for artists and composers. By the fifth century the first known Marian feast was celebrated; three centuries later the Nativity of the Theotokos, her Entrance into the Temple, her Conception, the *Hypapante* (or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple), the Annunciation and the Dormition/Assumption had all entered the festal calendar of the Byzantine church.[7] The whole annual cycle was now telling Marian stories. Although the *Protevangelium* and various accounts of the Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin could offer a narrative framework, most of these festivals required the expansion of earlier stories and the development of motifs.

Much recent Marian scholarship has centred on imagery and cult.[8] Such emphasis has rightly challenged the dogmatic focus of earlier scholarship. Was the official recognition of Mary's role as 'Theotokos' ('God-bearer') at the Council of Ephesus (AD 431) the one formative event in the history of Marian history? Attention to relatively early source material has accompanied such questions.[9] This volume instead takes an interest in the stories about the Virgin: how ecclesiastical or cultural circumstances favoured particular ways to tell her story, and how historical people related their various versions to interpret their own lives. The enquiries bring the volume into the less researched Middle Byzantine period. Many of

the Eastern Mediterranean Tradition: Visits to the Underworld from Antiquity to Byzantium (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 287–303.

7 For a more detailed table of feasts related to Mary in Byzantium in the ninth century, see I. M. Calabuig, 'The Liturgical Cult of Mary in the East and West', in A. J. Chupungco (ed.), *Handbook for Liturgical Studies,* vol. 5: *Liturgical Time and Space* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 271–2.

8 The new emphasis is represented by volumes like M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Brubaker and Cunningham, *Cult of the Mother of God*; C. Maunder (ed.), *Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Burns and Oates, 2008).

9 See e.g. Peltomaa et al., *Presbeia Theotokou*; recent monograph studies include L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); S. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016); T. Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

the studies employ material that has so far attracted little or no scholarly interest; they draw scholarly attention to 'new' and exciting sources in various media.

The book traces changes and fluctuations in the accounts of Mary, from the Early through the Middle Byzantine period.[10] During the course of these centuries, Greek authors began to fill the gaps and piece together extensive stories of the Virgin's life from beginning to end. Such *Lives* of the Virgin have been described as compositions that sit somewhere between hagiography and homiletics.[11] As scholars have recently demonstrated, the boundaries between genres in Byzantine literature were porous, such that both structural and rhetorical modes of expression could pass between them.[12] It is thus through the vehicle of both poetry and prose that a complete Marian biography (or versions of a biography) evolved in the course of the Middle Byzantine period. Church buildings, such as the one in the Daphni Monastery, conveyed the narrative of Mary's life in large iconographic sequences. Isolated episodes formerly expanded to fit particular cultic events were now kneaded into a coherent life-story. But much had happened along the way. Narratives concerning the Virgin's birth, infancy, relationship to Jesus during his ministry, passion and resurrection, as well as her death or 'dormition' and assumption into heaven had already circulated in extra-canonical literature of the late antique period.[13] Such stories, known from the earliest sources, reappeared in later songs and sermons, as well as in images and amulets.[14] As several chapters in this volume point out, however, Byzantine writers and iconographers assimilated older extra-canonical versions in different ways, sometimes accepting this material

[10] For recent studies of Marian narratives and panegyrics in the Middle period, see B. V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006); B. K. Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven. Marian Doctrine and Devotion. Image and Typology in the Patristic and Medieval Periods*, vol. 1: *Doctrine and Devotion* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012).

[11] S. Mimouni, *Les traditions anciennes sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de Marie* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 75.

[12] See M. E. Mullett, 'The Madness of Genre', *DOP* 46 (1992): 235–43; P. A. Agapitos, 'Literary Criticism', in E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 79–80.

[13] Texts containing full biographies, or *Lives*, of the Virgin survive from an earlier date in Syriac. See A. Desreumaux, 'Deux anciens manuscrits syriaques d'œuvres apocryphes dans le nouveau fonds de Sainte-Catherine du Sinaï: la Vie de la Vierge et les actes d'André et Mathias', *Apocrypha* 20 (2009): 115–36; C. Naffah, 'Les "Histoires" Syriaques de la Vierge: traditions apocryphes anciennes et récentes', *Apocrypha* 20 (2009): 137–88.

[14] For previous studies on these issues, see M. B. Cunningham, 'The Reception of Romanos in Middle Byzantine Homiletics and Hymnography', *DOP* 62 (2008): 251–60; Cunningham, 'Use of the *Protevangelion*'.

as 'historically' accurate and sometimes interpreting it allegorically. The dynamics of stories' reception, reuse and recycling justifies the focus on narrative in this book.

What is Narrative?

There are many kinds of stories, and these can be defined in various ways. Often *narrative* is thought of as a particular expression of a given story or event. It may be described as an account of events with a certain chronology. Barbara Herrnstein Smith defines it as 'someone telling someone else that something happened'.[15] The definition works for an oral story, and even for the short Ekelöf fragment, but perhaps less well for narrative images. The literary theorist Roland Barthes has suggested a much wider concept of narrative: 'Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, *drame*, comedy, pantomime, paintings … , stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation.'[16]

This book adopts a broad concept of narrative, and suggests, following Barthes, that a still picture can be the vehicle for narrative, because it indicates motion or insinuates that something is happening. A picture of the Annunciation does not give a chronological account or a series of events; it stages an episode. The 'narrative' is monoscenic and frozen, but it implies action. Moreover, the picture draws on a rich narrative thesaurus from the well-known story that it reiterates. Into the reading of the image go the viewer's own preconceptions of the event, learned perhaps from hearing the Gospel of Luke or the *Protevangelium*. Thus the narrative is not captured in the image, or restricted to the image as such, but comes about as a reflection of it.[17] The icon that came before Ekelöf in Istanbul sparked narrative glimpses in him and engendered historical musings about the Virgin Mary.[18]

15 B. H. Smith, 'Narrative Version, and Narrative Theories', in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *On Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 228.

16 R. Barthes, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', *New Literary History* 6/2 (1975): 237.

17 As Stendhal famously wrote, 'a novel is a mirror travelling down the road. Sometimes it reflects the blue of the heavens to your eye, sometimes the mud of the filthy puddles on the road'. Stendhal, *The Red and the Black*, trans. R. Gard (London: Penguin Classics, 2002), 374.

18 For a discussion of images and narratives, see W. Steiner, 'Pictorial Narrativity', in M.-L. Ryan (ed.), *Narrative across Media: The Language of Storytelling* (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 145–77.

We do not aim to explore the intricacies of narratology in relation to the various media of the Byzantine period,[19] but rather to study a growing Byzantine urge to tell stories about the Virgin Mary. This urge led her in different directions, in visual, textual and aural media, from the fourth century to the Komnenian period, through the Justinianic era, Iconoclasm and the time of the Macedonian dynasty. The book studies, in other words, the dynamic unfolding of tradition, understood as the continuous creative retelling of received stories.

This Book

Part I, 'Telling Visual Stories', turns to material and space in order to highlight that narratives are more than words. The Virgin's story grew out of and came to shape devotional spaces and practices, from the earliest small-scale images to fully developed Marian imagery in the ecclesiastical architecture of the post-Iconoclastic Middle Byzantine period.

Maria Lidova opens the section by tracing early narrative imagery in Late Antiquity and studying how Marian narrative scenes developed. This investigation leads her to question the impact of the Council of Ephesus on visual representations of Mary. She shows that Christian artists in the pre-Ephesine period already took an interest in Mary's personal story, thus demonstrating that she was a venerable figure in her own right in addition to playing a fundamental role in Christ's incarnation. The Council did not provoke a change in the way that Mary's visual story was told, although it may have encouraged the expansion of this form of expression.

Andrea Olsen Lam focuses on small-scale objects and amulets from this early period of visual Marian narrative. Deriving their narrative content from the New Testament texts, these images served several purposes: some were worn prophylactically while others were read for educational reasons. Lam suggests that representations of Mary's pregnancy, such as the Visitation (or the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth when both women were pregnant, as described in Luke 1:39–45), may have served to charm the wearer into conceiving, carrying and giving birth to a child. In this way the visual evocations of miraculous pregnancy stories were produced in order to engender new stories of new pregnancies.

[19] For studies in narrative and various media, see M.-L. Ryan (ed.), *Narrative across Media: The Language of Storytelling* (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

Eirini Panou examines the reception of the *Protevangelium* with particular attention to Mary's childhood and her mother Anna. Panou shows how Middle Byzantine homilies and art used the *Protevangelium* to interpret in a theological way the relationship between these holy figures. Tension existed between commentators who accepted different versions of the Marian infancy story because these conveyed separate – and sometimes conflicting – messages about her forthcoming role in the incarnation of Christ. The Christological implications of Mary's narrative continued to be refined during the Iconoclast period; preachers and hymnographers also began to accept more fully the elements that were found only in apocryphal literature.

Maria Evangelatou approaches the intersection of imagery, ritual, poetry and the re-enactment of the sacrifice story in the Christian Eucharist. Building on the suggestive location of Mary's icon over the altar in church sanctuaries, she shows that both liturgical texts and images render the Theotokos as the provider of Christ's mystical body and blood. Evangelatou is thus able to conclude from her multimedial survey that 'Mary's Eucharistic identity was continuously explored' in Byzantine sources.

Leslie Brubaker rounds off this section with a ground-breaking study of the eleventh-century monastic church of the Virgin at Daphni, near Athens. This church contains one of the oldest visual representations of Mary's life in Byzantine monumental art. Brubaker explores the location of the Marian cycle of images, arguing that their arrangement within the church allows 'visual links' to occur between the scenes. This contributes to a kind of *spatial storytelling*, which would have engaged viewers according to their gender since men and women stood separately within the liturgical space. The events depicted in the mosaics thus resonate within the monumental space and interact with each other as well as with their viewers.

Part II turns to festal and Lenten hymnography that was composed in honour of the Virgin Mary throughout the Early and Middle Byzantine periods. It starts with the Constantinopolitan kontakion hymn and its greatest proponent, Romanos the Melode.[20] Studies of kanon hymnography

[20] The studies of Romanos the Melode are too numerous to list here. See (most recently) Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song*; S. Gador-Whyte, *Theology and Poetry in Early Byzantium: The Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) and her 'Changing Conceptions of Mary in Sixth-Century Byzantium: The Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist', in B. Neil and L. Garland (eds.), *Questions of Gender in Byzantine Society* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 77–92; G. Frank, 'Dialogue and Deliberation: The Sensory Self in the Hymns of Romanos the Melodist', in D. Brakke, M. L. Satlow and S. Weitzman (eds.), *Religion and the Self in Antiquity* (Bloomington, IN, and Indianapolis: University of

follow those on the kontakion. The kanon originated in Jerusalem and came to Constantinople as part of the hagiopolite influence.[21] By about the end of the ninth century such hymns adorned each day of the liturgical year and came to represent one of the richest surviving sources of Byzantine theological and devotional teaching. The genre has so far not received the scholarly attention that it deserves.[22]

Thomas Arentzen compares the treatment of the Annunciation story by the eighth-century preacher Germanos I of Constantinople (ca. 650–742), with that of the sixth-century hymnographer Romanos the Melode. He demonstrates how the pre-Iconoclastic Annunciation celebrations, as exemplified by these Constantinopolitan writers, privileged dramatic storytelling. Mary appears as someone who is characterised through her own speech. Germanos was clearly influenced by Romanos, but assumed a much more 'royal' perception of the Virgin.

Georgia Frank studies how Romanos the Melode worked with Mary's voice within his songs. Frank not only explores some of the more well-known kontakia for major feasts, but also engages with the understudied *stichera* for the Nativity. Looking at how Mary holds her tongue, Frank discovers patterns of speech and silence and analyses the Virgin's role in the gendered realm of voices. As instances of narrative suspense and theological meditation, the liturgical songs let other voices resound in anticipation of Mary's own words.

Derek Krueger ventures into the relatively uncharted territory of Byzantine kanon poetry and draws attention to a phenomenon even less studied than the kanons themselves, namely, the *theotokia*, which are specific Marian verses included at the end of most odes of kanons. He analyses in particular a kanon entitled *On the Transgression of Adam*. It is

Indiana Press, 2005), 163–79; L. M. Peltomaa, '"Cease Your Lamentations, I Shall Become an Advocate for You". Mary as Intercessor in Romanos' Hymnography', in Peltomaa et al., *Presbeia Theotokou*, 131–7.

21 For the early kanon, see S. S. Frøyshov, 'The Rite of Jerusalem', in *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*: www.hymnology.co.uk/r/rite-of-jerusalem; for the its later reception in the wider Byzantine rite, see Dimitri Conomos, 'Byzantine Hymnody', *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*: www.hymnology.co.uk/b/byzantine-hymnody.

22 See, however, P. Toma, *Joseph the Hymnographer. Kanons on Saints According to the Eight Modes. Critical Edition* (Inaugural PhD thesis, University of Münster, 2016); D. Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects. Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of Self in Byzantium* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), which focuses on Andrew of Crete's *Great Kanon* and on those in the Lenten Triodion, 130–96; N. P. Ševčenko, 'Canon and Calendar: The Role of a Ninth-Century Hymnographer in Shaping the Celebration of Saints', in L. Brubaker (ed.), *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 101–14.

composed by a certain Christopher who probably lived in the ninth century. Examining the interaction between the narrative of Adam's fall in the kanon and the interspersed *theotokia*, Krueger points out that the kanon genre interweaves various threads of images and narratives, through which the Marian theotokia run as a separate but central thread. The result, at least in this pre-Lenten kanon, is what Krueger calls 'an idiosyncratic Mariology'.

Fr Damaskinos Olkinuora follows with a chapter on unpublished Byzantine kanon hymns that celebrate the feast of Mary's Entrance into the Temple. His material includes kanons attributed to the eighth-century Joseph the Hymnographer, but also to otherwise unknown poets. Fr Damaskinos demonstrates that various versions of the story exist side by side in the hymns: webs of cross-references combine to form new, multi-layered narratives, narratives in which the congregation becomes directly involved with the help of 'musical intertextuality'. He proposes, therefore, a multi-faceted methodology for studying Byzantine hymnography. Fr Damaskinos concludes that the feast of the Entrance, like that of the *Hypapante*, offers a symbolic boundary between the old and new covenants. In the case of the former feast, the Virgin Mary mediates the two states of existence, since she is the place – and vehicle – for their meeting and fulfilment.

Part III of the book deals with homiletic texts dating from the earliest Byzantine period to the twelfth century. Homiletic literature exhibits a persistent and uncontested presence throughout Byzantine civilisation.[23] Preachers used it to form dogmatic meditations as well as dramatic confrontations. Some were didactic, some encomiastic and some hagiographical.

Stephen Shoemaker shows how diverse Late Antique narratives of Mary can be in their content as he investigates debates about whether she, in

[23] For earlier surveys of Mary in Byzantine homilies, see P. Allen, 'Portrayals of Mary in Greek Homiletic Literature (6th–7th Centuries)', in Brubaker and Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, 69–88; in the same volume: N. Tsironis, 'Emotion and the Senses in Marian Homilies of the Middle Byzantine Period', 179–96, S. Shoemaker, 'A Mother's Passion: Mary at the Crucifixion and Resurrection in the Earliest *Life of the Virgin* and its Influence on George of Nikomedeia's Passion Homilies', 53–67; M. B. Cunningham, 'The Meeting of the Old and the New: The Typology of Mary the Theotokos in Byzantine Homilies and Hymns', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *Mary and the Church*, Studies in Church History 39 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), 52–62. For collections of Marian homilies in translation, see M. B. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008); B. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998). For a recent assessment of the problems associated with study of this literary genre, see T. Antonopoulou, 'Byzantine Homiletics: An Introduction to the Field and its Study', in K. Spronk, G. Rouwhorst and S. Royé (eds.), *Challenges and Perspectives: A Catalogue of Byzantine Manuscripts in their Liturgical Context*, Subsidia 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 183–98.

fact, was entirely human and whether she actually died. He shows, moreover, that the impulse to write fuller *Lives* of the Virgin Mary appears relatively early. A Coptic homily attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, Shoemaker argues, was written in the sixth century and can be counted among the early surviving *Lives*.

Francesca Dell'Acqua concentrates more exclusively on Mary's passing away and the interpretation of her dormition and assumption into heaven. The geographical focus shifts to eighth- and ninth-century Italy. Dell'Acqua studies the interaction between homilies and visual art and explores how – at a time when the feast of the Virgin's Assumption had just been added to Roman liturgical calendar – Mary came to be interpreted as a 'ladder to heaven'.

The emphasis shifts to Greek preaching in Fr Evgenios Iverites' chapter, which explores the early eighth-century Marian homilies of the towering Byzantine preachers Germanos of Constantinople, Andrew of Crete, and John of Damascus. Their homilies connect her story intimately with doctrinal issues in order to teach Christology. Byzantine preachers expressed the mysterious doctrine of Christ's incarnation by focusing on his mother's own conception, birth, upbringing in the temple, death, and assumption. Her holy and 'God-bearing' body helped to reveal the Chalcedonian paradox of two natures in one person; the reality of Christ's participation and ongoing immanence in the created world became more tangible with the help of apocryphal narratives concerning Mary.

James of Kokkinobaphos' homilies, composed in the twelfth century and currently being edited by Elizabeth Jeffreys, represent a more literary form of homiletic discourse. The series of six homilies provides an encomiastic narrative, beginning with the conception of the Virgin Mary and ending with the annunciation. Jeffreys suggests intriguingly that the presumed recipient or patron of these versions, the *sevastokratorissa* Eirene,[24] may have influenced the author's interpretation of his subject. The homilies may have been written for meditative devotion in front of an icon, so that text and image were meant to tell a story together, a story that the devotee might use as a kind of mirror.

The fourth and final Part of the book examines the flourishing of what one may call the full hagiographical *Lives* of the Virgin that appeared in the Middle Byzantine period. Such texts, which represent a composite genre made up of narrative, panegyric and acclamation, began to be produced

[24] The title 'sevastokratorissa' indicates the wife of a senior official in the later Byzantine court.

in the Greek-speaking world from about the late eighth century onward.[25] The hagiographical compositions of Epiphanios of Kallistratos and John Geometres provide full-blown narratives of Mary's legendary biography from conception to death and assumption into heaven. It is possible that such narratives served as liturgical and para-liturgical readings in churches and monasteries throughout the empire.[26]

As Mary Cunningham shows, the late eighth- and early ninth-century monk Epiphanios of Kallistratos set out to write a full *Life of the Theotokos* in order to present her as a devotional model for monks and nuns.[27] He saw himself as a collator and systematiser, and explicitly defined his own work as a reworking of earlier sources. He tried to navigate between what he saw as historical 'facts' of Mary's life and unreliable tales; ironically, however, this led him to renounce much of what was to him received tradition, including more canonical versions. Cunningham concludes that, given the unconventional character of this version, 'medieval readers accepted – and perhaps even expected – some variation in the narratives'.

Fr Maximos Constas studies the important *Life of the Virgin* by the tenth-century court official and later monk, John Geometres.[28] His chapter combines an investigation of the *Life* with an account of its long delayed critical edition, thus tracing its reception right up to the present day. It involves the analysis of personal correspondence between two renowned Marian scholars, Antoine Wenger and Michel van Esbroeck, and the rediscovery of a lost manuscript that contains Wenger's critical (but unpublished) edition of the text. Fr Maximos shows that Geometres' piece is a reworking of earlier *Lives*, including the one by Epiphanios, but that it nonetheless amounts to a highly original work. Constas and Christos Simelidis are currently preparing a critical edition of Geometres' *Life*.

[25] Controversy exists concerning the date at which Marian hagiography appeared in the Byzantine world, although scholars agree that fifth- or sixth-century roots for the genre exist in the Syriac tradition and possibly in Coptic, as Shoemaker argues in his chapter in the present volume. For a summary of the debate and relevant secondary bibliography, see Chapter 14, n. 13.

[26] S. J. Shoemaker, *Maximus the Confessor. Life of the Virgin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 3.

[27] The *Life* (CANT 91; BHG 1049) is published in two slightly different versions, based on separate manuscripts: PG 120, 185–216; A. Dressel (ed.), *Epiphanii monachi edita et inedita* (Paris and Leipzig: Brockhaus and Avenarius, 1843), 13–44.

[28] A section of the *Life* (CANT 92; BHG 1102g–h, 1123m, 1143c) is published in A. Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition Byzantine du Vie au Xe siècle*, Archives de l'Orient Chrétien, vol. 5 (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1955), 363–415. A critical edition, as noted above, is now under way.

Human beings tell stories in order to make sense of their surroundings and belief systems. The Mother of God represented for Byzantine Christians the grounding of transcendent reality in the physical world of historical time – that is, the world of narrative. This book explores various forms of narrative, both textual and visual, which were elaborated in original – and sometimes surprising – ways in the course of the Early and Middle Byzantine periods. They reflect not only an ongoing theological interest in Mary, as 'Birth-giver' and Mother of God, but also a human and emotional concern with her qualities as a human being. This holy figure fulfilled many roles in Byzantine society, including those of human guarantor of Christ's incarnation, intercessor and defender of orthodox Christians. However, she also remained a person to whom individuals, both men and women, could appeal for help and healing. As Dame Averil Cameron has memorably remarked, the 'extraordinary capaciousness' of the Theotokos makes her a person who may 'be all things to people at different times and places'.[29] We hope that the present book demonstrates the creative potential of narrative – whether textual, aural or visual – in shaping the ever-changing Byzantine views of Mary, as virginal birth-giver and extraordinary nurse, holy container and eucharistic provider, empress and ascetic, faithful disciple, warrior and ladder, intercessor and heavenly mother.

[29] A. Cameron, 'Introduction', in Brubaker and Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, 3.

PART I

Telling Visual Stories: The Virgin Mary in Art

1 | Embodied Word

Telling the Story of Mary in Early Christian Art

MARIA LIDOVA

The veneration of the Mother of God and the imagery dedicated to her developed gradually in the Early Christian Church. Scholars still struggle to single out the earliest and most relevant evidence for the cult of the Virgin and to determine the starting point of devotion that is specifically Marian in focus. The standard narrative, which links the rise of the Marian cult to the decisions of the Council of Ephesus (AD 431), has been seriously questioned in recent years, with most criticism stemming from disagreements about the significance of the Council itself.[1] While the Council remains the common point of reference for most scholars, some reject its relevance to the cult of the Virgin and consider the figure of Christ as the main focus of ecclesiastical discussion. They view the attention given to Mary as being conditioned by her instrumental role in God's incarnation.[2] Another group of specialists, proponents of the early cult of Mary, doubt that the Council needs to be seen as the prerequisite of the worship's development; according to them, it might have simply played a transformative role. It was not the starting point of the cult but rather a chapter in a longer tradition.[3]

Therefore, questions regarding the origins and influence in the cult of Mary are still difficult to answer. Extensive research is currently being done on the textual and more specifically liturgical sources which indicate that the profound religious interest in Mary has ancient roots.[4] The present

1 On the Council, see B. Studer, 'Il Concilio di Efeso (431) nella luce della dottrina mariana di Cirillo di Alessandria', in S. Felici (ed.), *La mariologia nella catechesi dei Padri (età postnicena)* (Rome: LAS, 1991), 49–67; J. A. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2004).

2 T. Klauser, 'Rom und der Kult der Gottesmutter Maria', *JAChr* 15 (1972): 120–35, esp. 126–35; R. M. Price, 'The *Theotokos* and the Council of Ephesus', in C. Maunder (ed.), *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 89–103; R. M. Price, 'The Virgin as Theotokos at Ephesus (AD 431) and earlier', in C. Maunder (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Mary* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

3 S. J. Shoemaker, 'The Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century: A Fresh Look at Some Old and New Sources', in Maunder, *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 71–87; S. J. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 166–229.

4 Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith*; see also M. Fassler, 'The First Marian Feast in Constantinople and Jerusalem: Chant Texts, Readings, and Homiletic Literature', in P. Jeffery (ed.), *The Study of Medieval Chant: Paths and Bridges, East and West* (Cambridge: Boydell Press, 2001),

study aims to complement this larger discussion with observations on the treatment of the Marian figure in the visual and material traditions, with a focus specifically on the role played by narrative compositions in the promotion of the image of Mary in Early Christian art.

The task is complicated by the fact that the earliest visual evidence for the veneration of the Virgin has not yet been thoroughly categorised.[5] The images that do survive are primarily found in the West and can be seen in catacomb paintings, representations on sarcophagi, reliquaries, gold glass vessel fragments and some textiles. The exact dating of these objects is not always easy to pinpoint but certain elements often indicate very ancient dates of production that precede the Council of Ephesus. Moreover, the contents of their representations are open to debate. For instance, a vast number of female representations from the Roman catacombs previously associated with Mary have recently been reassessed, with the suggestion that not all images of a woman with a child should be read as referring to the protagonists of the New Testament.[6] Donors' portraits and images of the deceased do indicate that other identifications are possible and often more plausible.[7] However, there

25–88; N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003); S. J. Shoemaker, 'Marian Liturgies and Devotion in Early Christianity', in S. J. Boss (ed.), *Mary: The Complete Resource* (London: Continuum, 2007), 130–45.

5 Kondakov's study of the early twentieth century still remains the most detailed analysis; see N. Kondakov, *Ikonographia Bogomateri* (St Petersburg: Imperatorskaia academia nauk, 1915; repr. 1998). The first volume of this work has been recently translated into Italian: I. Foletti (trans.), *Iconografia della Madre di Dio* (Rome: Viella, 2014). See also E. Jastrzebowska, *Bild und Wort: das Marienleben und die Kindheit Jesu in der christlichen Kunst vom 4. bis 8. Jh. und ihre apokryphen Quellen* (Warsaw: Institute of Archaeology at Warsaw University, 1992). For useful recent overviews of the early material in the West and in the East, see G. Parlby, 'The Origins of Marian Art: The Evolution of Marian Imagery in the Western Church until AD 431', in Boss, *Mary, The Complete Resource*, 106–29; A. Effenberger, 'Maria als Vermittlerin und Fürbitterin. Zum Marienbild in der spätantiken und frühbyzantinischen Kunst Ägyptens', in L. M. Peltomaa, A. Külzer and P. Allen (eds.), *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Time and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Century)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015), 49–108.

6 On the images of Mary in catacomb painting, see H. F. J. Liell, *Mariendarstellungen in den Katakomben: Die Darstellung der allerseligsten Jungfrau und Gottesgebärerin Maria auf den Kunstdenkmälern der Katakomben* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1887); Kondakov, *Ikonographia*, 13–59.

7 S. M. Salvadori, 'Per feminam mors, per feminam vita: Images of Women in the Early Christian Funerary Art of Rome' (unpubl. PhD thesis, New York University, 2002), 268–353; G. Parlby, 'The Origins of Marian Art in the Catacombs and the Problems of Identification', in Maunder, The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary, 41–56; A. Ahlqvist, 'Maria, madre di Cristo, e altre madri presenti nell'arte funeraria paleocristiana', *Acta archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* 7 (2009): 9–31; G. Parlby, 'What can Art Tell us about the Cult of the Virgin Mary in the Early Roman Church? A Re-evaluation of the Evidence for Marian Images in Late Antiquity' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Roehampton University, 2010), 17–54.

are cases in which a figure can be securely identified with Mary: these are the representations accompanied by captions with her name and the narrative compositions that feature the Virgin as one of the fixed protagonists.

Mary – What's in a Name?

Unlike the easily recognisable Marian figures of the sixth century, when the cult of Mary acquired its full extent, the female representations of the fourth and fifth centuries are not always easy to identify and thus cause debates.[8] Indeed, captions that become compulsory in Byzantine art after Iconoclasm, appear only sporadically in Early Christian art.[9] Thus, the instances where the figure of Mary is clearly defined by a name placed in proximity to her figure are in fact surprising and significant exceptions. The standard formula used in the earliest instances is limited to the simple version of just the name.[10] The practice of captioning does not seem to depend on the medium of the artwork, nor is the logic of the use of captions evident. Sometimes textual identifiers are omnipresent in a given artwork

[8] The most prominent example of this characteristic ambiguity is provided by the fifth-century mosaic decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore church in Rome, where the image of Mary has been associated with several different figures in the visual narrative on the triumphal arch: M. R. Menna, 'I mosaici della basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore', in M. Andaloro (ed.), *L'orizzonte tardoantico e le nuove immagini: 312–468. Corpus della Pittura Medievale a Roma* (Milan: Jaca, 2006), 1, 306–46; M. Lidova, 'The Imperial *Theotokos*: Revealing the Concept of Early Christian Imagery in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome', *Convivium* 2/2 (2015): 60–81.

[9] An early example of an extensive use of captions in mural painting, which includes the figure Mary accompanied by name, can be found in the decoration in the Chapel of Peace at the El Bagawat necropolis in Egypt: M. Zibawi, *Bagawat. Peintures paléochrétiennes d'Égypte* (Paris: Picard, 2005), 95–132, esp. 124–7.

[10] Similar simplicity is generally characteristic of the fourth-century Christian art, which privileges the use of names for captions, omitting the indication of the saintly status of the figure (*Sanctus* in Latin and *Hagios* in Greek). Later on, such prefixes become obligatory. On the use of captions, see: B. Kiilerich, 'A che cosa serve un nome? Iscrizioni di nomi e di epiteti nelle immagini byzantine: usi e significati', in A. C. Quintavalle (ed.), *Medioevo: Immagine e racconto* (Milan: Electa, 2003), 87–95; H. Maguire, 'Eufrasius and Friends: On Names and their Absence in Byzantine Art', in L. James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 139–60. The choice of the name 'Mary' is also conditioned by the way it appears in sacred texts both canonical and apocryphal. In subsequent centuries the captions and epithets pertinent to Mary underwent a substantial transformation, shifting from Maria and Saint Mary, to *Theotokos* and *Meter Theou*, specific titles of venerated icons, and many others; see I. Kalavrezou, 'Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became *Meter Theou*', *DOP* 44 (1990): 165–72; B. L. Shilling, 'Apse Mosaics of the Virgin Mary in Early Byzantine Cyprus' (unpubl. PhD thesis, John Hopkins University, 2013), 149–56. The development of the name and captions is itself demonstrative of the gradual change in the cult and theology of the Mother of God. For further discussion of this topic, see Andrea Olsen Lam's chapter in the present volume.

or decoration, whereas in others only single images are granted an accompanying inscription.

The spread of the caption tradition is particularly well attested in early textiles. The Victoria and Albert Museum collection, for example, includes two fragments deriving from the same work, which bear narrative scenes featuring Mary in the scenes of the Annunciation and the Nativity of Christ.[11] In the first instance, Mary is seated on the left holding a loom with both hands, which she picks up from the small chest besides her and raises into the air.[12] (Figure 1.1). In front of Mary is a figure of an archangel depicted wearing a beautifully folded garment with two wings spread wide behind the back that are characteristically marked by the outlines of separate dotted feathers. Although the torso of the angel is oriented in the direction opposite to Mary, he turns his head towards the Virgin, as if preparing to address her with the message that she will become the Mother of God. The name MAPIA is written in Greek letters between these two figures in three rows, due to the limited space and the large scale of the script. The second textile fragment also depicts an archangel in dialogue with Mary, but this time the heavenly messenger stands on the left and communicates with the Virgin who is lying on a couch beside an altar-like manger with the baby Jesus represented inside. The arrangement of the scene clearly indicates the subject of the Nativity. Once again, the name MAPIA appears in proximity to the Virgin's halo, making her identity explicit and singling her out among the characters of the scene.

11 Inv. 723–1897 (55 cm × 68 cm) and Inv. 1103–1900 (47 cm × 92.5 cm). P. Williamson, *The Medieval Treasury: The Art of the Middle Ages in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1986), 46–9, pl. 1; H. M. Rutschowscaya, *Coptic Fabrics* (Paris: Editions Adam Biro, 1990), 132; L. Woolley, 'Medieval Mediterranean Textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum: Resist Dyed Linens from Egypt Dating from the Fourth to the Seventh Centuries A.D.', *Textile History* 32/1 (2001): 106–13; R. Cormack and M. Vassilaki (eds.), *Byzantium: 330–1453.* Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in London (25 October 2008–22 March 2009) (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008), nos. 160, 188, 419 (only Nativity fragment); C. G. Taylor, 'Burial Threads: A Late Antique Textile and the Iconography of the Virgin Annunciate Spinning', in M. Harlow and M.-L. Nosch (eds.), *Greek and Roman Textiles and Dress. An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 399–414; *Egypt: Faith After the Pharaohs* (London: British Museum, 2015), 174–5 (only Annunciation fragment); C. G. Taylor, *Late Antique Images of the Virgin Annunciate Spinning: Alotting the Scarlet and the Purple* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 169–72.

12 This iconography accentuating the loom in the hands of the Virgin is characteristic of other fifth-century representations of the Annunciation (cf. S. Maria Maggiore mosaics pyxis and Pignatta sarcophagus). It probably reflects a particular iconographic pattern popular at the time and, judging on the provenance of the surviving images, used both in the East and the West: M. Lidova, 'XAIPE MAPIA: Annunciation Imagery in the Making', *IKON* 10 (2017): 45–62.

Figure 1.1 Annunciation, a fragment of a hanging textile, fifth century (?), resist painted and dyed linen, Akhmim, Egypt, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (photo © Victoria and Albert Museum). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

Unfortunately, the exact dating of these textiles cannot be established with any certainty without technical analysis, and the range of possibilities extends from the late fourth to the sixth century. The use of the resist-dyeing technique best corresponds to certain non-Christian textile examples of the fourth and early fifth century.[13] The method of execution, considered together with the style and subject matter, also helps scholars attribute the Victoria and Albert pieces to the group of textiles from Akhmim in Egypt. Although the two scenes are currently in a fragmentary state, it is obvious that they formed part of a larger narrative where separate compositions were divided by representations of columns just as on some Early Christian sarcophagi. Within this cycle the figure of Mary was highlighted both compositionally and with the help of inscriptions. Hence, these fragments provide important material evidence for the seldom acknowledged early

[13] I would like to thank Dr Cäcilia Fluck for sharing with me her opinion on the possible date of the textiles. According to her, the V&A fragments are more safely attributed to the fifth or sixth century.

tradition of Mary-focused cycles and scenes in Eastern Christian textile production.[14]

To be added to the array of examples is another textile bearing the name of the Virgin, today preserved in the famous Abegg-Stiftung collection near Bern.[15] The object in question is thought to have been used as a tunic-like vestment and is often called the 'Marian silk' because of its imagery. The surviving fragment is decorated with several consecutive scenes that were reproduced multiple times in rows that cover all the available space. The order of the sequence is: Mary at the Temple before the High Priest (which could represent the commission of the Temple veil because of the basket depicted behind the Priest's figure), the Selection of Joseph, the Annunciation at the Spring and the Nativity. The use of inscriptions was rather extensive in this case and small captions accompany almost every scene. The easiest of the scenes to identify is the composition of the Annunciation at the Spring, where Mary is conventionally represented leaning on one knee and collecting water in the pitcher while the archangel addresses her from behind. The words of Gabriel are conveniently incorporated into the scene and read as XEPE [sic] MAPIA, or 'Hail Mary', with the name MAPIA placed exactly above the Virgin's head. While clearly the text is a variation of the words recorded in the *Protevangelium of James* (11:1–3) and the Gospel of Luke (1:26–38), this particular formula reveals an intentional interpolation of the name of Mary, characteristic only of the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (Ps-Mt 9).[16] On another occasion within the fragment, the name MAPI again appears next to the female figure in the composition that shows Mary at the Temple before the High Priest, thus justifying the identification of this fabric with 'Marian silk', since the Virgin

[14] A. Stauffer, *Spätantike koptische Wirkereien: Untersuchungen zur ikonographischen Tradition in spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Textilwerkstätten* (Bern: P. Lang, 1992), 158, n. 69; *Textiles of Late Antiquity* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 13; M.-H. Rutschowscaya, 'The Mother of God in Coptic Textiles', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens and Milan: Skira, 2000), 219–25. See also the discussion in Chapter 2.

[15] Inv. 3100b. L. Kötzsche, 'Die Marienseide in der Abegg-Stiftung. Bemerkungen zur Ikonographie der Szenenfolge', in *Begegnung von Heidentum und Christentum* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 1993), 183–94; S. McNally, 'Syncretism in Panopolis? The Evidence of the "Mary Silk" in the Abegg Stiftung', in A. Egberts, B. P. Muhs and J. Van Der Vliet (eds.), *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (London Brill, 2002), 145–64; S. Schrenk, *Textilien des Mittelmeerraums aus spätantiker bis frühislamischer Zeit* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2004), 185–9; Taylor, *Late Antique Images,* 164–8.

[16] J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 61.

clearly becomes the main protagonist of the whole cycle.[17] Although the dating of the Abegg-Stiftung textile is uncertain, its archaeological and typological characteristics lead most scholars to give it an early dating around 400 or even before, which is quite plausible considering that it was found together with an early fourth-century tapestry representing Dionysus.

Yet textiles are not the only medium in which early images of Mary are identified by name. Further evidence is provided by gold medallions found in the Roman catacombs. These gold glass fragments originally formed the central piece of bowls or vessels that were broken in such a way as to leave the bottom part with precious figurative representation made with gold leaf that could be used as markers near the *loculi* of Christian tombs in the underground cemeteries.[18] Among the surviving examples several pieces bear images of a female figure represented frontally, sometimes as an orant, dressed in a belted tunic with jewelled collar. This conventional type was used for different saints, but in several cases the identity of the Virgin is indicated by small captions recorded in the two different Latin spellings, MARIA or MARA.[19] Although some scholars have attempted to interpret the misspelled version as a possible reference to an unknown Roman saint or a deceased donor, it is evident that both versions refer to the Mother of God.[20] The rather unconventional representation of Mary with her hair

[17] Kötzsche, 'Die Marienseide', 186.

[18] On gold glass, see C. R. Morey, *The Gold-Glass Collection of the Vatican Library: with Additional Catalogues of Other Gold-Glass Collections* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1959); S. L. Smith, *Gold Glass Vessels of the Late Roman Empire: Production, Context and Function* (unpubl. PhD thesis, State University of New Jersey, 2000).

[19] On images of Mary on golden glass, see Kondakov, *Iconographia Bogomateri*, 76–82; Brenk, *The Apse, the Image and the Icon: An Historical Perspective of the Apse as a Space for Images* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2010) 66–8, nn. 225, 229; E. Rubery, 'From Catacomb to Sanctuary: The Orant Figure and the Cults of the Mother of God and S. Agnes in Early Christian Rome, with Special Reference to Gold Glass', *SP* 73 (2014), 169–214, esp. 197. Although Rubery refers to the lack of specific Marian studies on gold glass vessels, it was Kondakov who first discussed extensively this material in connection with the early iconography and cult of the Mother of God.

[20] The use of inscriptions on the gold glass is contemporary with some of the epigraphical evidence found in the Roman catacombs. Margarita Guarducci suggested that the letter 'M' found in the graffiti of the Roman catacombs could stand for the name of Mary. Today, Guarducci's argument is found unlikely and criticised by the epigraphers. However, the first example that she discusses, which sparked the whole theory (the inscription in the Catacombs of St Peter) does read clearly as 'Maria' and can be taken as an invocation of the Mother of God. See M. Guarducci, 'Maria nell' epigrafia paleocristiana di Roma', *Marianum* 25 (1963): 248–61. Furthermore, it is believed that the abbreviation 'XMΓ' in most cases should be read as 'Christon Maria genna', which means that in this case as well, 'M' would stand for the name of the Virgin. See Brenk, *The Apse*, 69–71; D. Mazzoleni, 'La mariologia nell'epigrafia Cristiana antica', *VetChr* 26 (1989): 59–68. I would like to thank Prof. Antonio E. Felle for consultation on the matter.

Figure 1.2 Old and New Testament scenes, reliquary, fourth century, embossed copper, Archaeological Museum, Zadar, Croatia (photo: author © Archaeological Museum of Zadar). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

gathered on top of her head, wearing pearl earrings and a jewelled collar, would complicate the identification of this figure were it not for the name inscriptions. The gold glass vessels can be securely dated to the fourth century, when they were extensively produced and used by the Christians, pagans and Jews. Thus, the Roman artefacts provide an incontestable proof of the spread and use of specifically Marian images long before the Council of Ephesus.

Another example that I would like to discuss here also dates back to the fourth century and survives on the surface of a reliquary box found in Novalje, on the island of Pag in contemporary Croatia.[21] (Figure 1.2). The wooden container, in the shape of a rectangular box (27.5 × 18 × 16.5 cm), is covered with embossed copper sheets, representing multiple scenes taken from the Old and New Testaments. Each composition is enclosed in a vertically oriented rectangular frame. These individual compartments are arranged in sequences of five and are repeated several times on the surface of the metal cover. The biblical part consisted of the

[21] A10317, A. Badurina, 'Ranokršćanski relikvijar iz Novalje [Early Christian Reliquary from Novalja]', *Materijali* 12 (1976): 283–95, reprinted in B. Ilakovac et al. (eds.), *Novalja Grad* (Novalja: Centar za kulturu grada Novalje, 1997), 13–37. See also B. Ilakovac, 'Ranokršćanski relikvijari kesenske (*Cissa*) biskupije iz Novalje na otkou Pagu', *VAMZ* 26–7 (1993–4): 47–65.

following subjects: Moses strikes water from the rock, Moses takes off his shoes before the burning bush, Noah, Daniel in the lions' den, the sacrifice of Isaac. The Gospel group was more unusual and combined narrative compositions with the representations of individual figures. It opened with the Multiplication of the Loaves, or alternatively the Miracle at Cana (the two scenes were iconographically similar), followed by the Resurrection of Lazarus. Next to the latter the viewer could see the image of the Good Shepherd, depicted as a male holding a ram on his shoulders, and defined by an inscription as PASTOR. Adjacent to this image is a compartment with a female figure standing frontally with both hands raised in the pose of an orant, her head turned to the right side towards the following scene of the miraculous healing of the blind man, which concluded the sequence. A nearby Latin inscription identifies the female figure as MARIA.

The archaeological context of the casket, as well as other objects found together with it and similar metal covers in other collections, all indicate the late fourth century as the most probable date of production. The appearance of Mary in the carefully selected repertoire of scenes on the Novalje casket is extremely important. Within this cycle, she is the only female figure and clearly functions as a counterpart to the image of the Good Shepherd. Incorporated into the series of Christ's miracles and Old Testament events, the image of the Virgin assumes an independent value of particular importance. Moreover, the nature of the casket's technical execution, which presupposes the use of moulds and mass production, indicates just how common and widespread the image of Mary may have been at the time.

Gospel Narratives

Even more diverse and prominent material for the pre-Ephesian representations of Mary is provided by narrative compositions portraying various events described in the canonical and apocryphal Gospels. The murals of the Roman catacombs and the sarcophagi reliefs, for instance, preserve a vast selection of examples.[22] In this chapter, I limit my focus to three subjects: the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi. Due to the specificity of the scenes and to the repertoire of iconographic conventions that they employ, Mary's identity in these compositions

[22] J. Wilpert, *Roma sotterranea: Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1903).

is undisputed. Scholars disagree, however, on whether or not the figure of Mary has independent relevance in the depictions of Christ's incarnation and childhood. In other words, can certain narrative compositions be read not only in Christological, but also in Marian terms? If they can, then can the development of the narrative representations supply further evidence for the Virgin's changing religious significance in the Early Christian Church?

The representations of the Annunciation based on the Gospel of Luke (Lk 1:26–38) are extremely rare in the art of the third and fourth century.[23] Among the paintings of the Roman catacombs, only three scenes have been identified with the event on the basis of their iconographic similarity to later examples.[24] The murals in question represent a wingless male figure standing before and in dialogue with a woman seated on a chair. The absence of additional details, such as the inclusion of the loom or casket and the male figure's winglessness has led numerous scholars to doubt the Christian content of these representations.[25] The alternative reading stresses the iconographic dependence of these compositions on Roman models, which often depict the deceased seated before a standing male interlocutor. I would like to argue instead that nothing impedes these catacomb murals from having contained double or multiple meanings for late antique viewers, especially considering that these scenes were part of larger decorative cycles on the walls of funerary chambers that were meant to make visible the Christian faith of their owners.[26] The laconic nature of their renderings, which art historians have sometimes found perplexing, could in fact simply be attributed to the fact that they are the earliest extant

[23] For a general overview of the Annunciation iconography in the Eastern Christian tradition, see N. Pokrovskiy, *Evangelie v pamyatnikakh ikonographii [Gospels in the Iconographic Evidence]* (St Petersburg: Tipographia Departamentov Udelov, 1892; repr. 2001), 89–130; H. Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantin et occidental du XIe au XVe siècle: l'Annonciation* (Venice: Institut hellénique d'études byzantines et post-byzantines de Venise, 2007). See also Lidova, 'ΧΑΙΡΕ ΜΑΡΙΑ'.

[24] The catacombs in question are those of Priscilla, Peter and Marcellinus, Dino Compagni: Liell, *Mariendarstellungen*, 198–215; A. Ferrua, *Le pitture della nuova catacomba di via Latina* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1960), 41–3; J. Deckers, H. R. Seeliger and G. Mietke, *Die Katakombe 'Santi Marcellino e Pietro', Repertorium der Malereien* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1987), 223–6; B. Mazzei, 'Il cubicolo dell'Annunciazione nelle catacombe di Priscilla: Nuove osservazioni alla luce dei recenti restauri', *RAChr* 75 (1999): 233–80; F. Bisconti, *Il restauro dell'ipogeo di via Dino Compagni: Nuove idee per la lettura del programma decorativo del cubicolo 'A'* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2003), esp. 56, 84.

[25] M. P. -A. Février, 'Les peintures de la catacombe de Priscille; deux scènes relatives à la vie intellectuelle', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Antiquité* 71 (1959): 301–19; Parlby, 'What can Art Tell us', 33–5.

[26] This view is in line with the most recent interpretations of the compositions: Mazzei, 'Il cubicolo', 263–5.

attempts to render the New Testament subject in art. Since the depicted scenes seem to concentrate on encounters that can be depicted in dialogue formats, the artists may have simply adopted the most convenient ancient Roman compositional conventions already in use.[27] Nonetheless, it is true that the catacomb paintings provide scarce evidence for the image of the Annunciation in comparison with other Christian themes.

As for the Roman sarcophagi, the Annunciation is totally absent from their marble relief decorations, with the exception of the late fourth-/early fifth-century tomb in Ravenna, the so-called Pignatta sarcophagus, which bears a clearly identifiable composition of the winged Gabriel before the Virgin spinning the veil on the shorter lateral side of the vasque.[28] Thus, while the scarcity of the material evidence does not suggest that the Annunciation was little known in Early Christian art, it does indicate that it was not as popular as other scenes from the Infancy of Christ – at least until the fifth century, when we encounter more numerous examples, which range from the unconventional representation in the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (432–40),[29] to those made on various minor artefacts, such as the Milan ivory diptych,[30] a wooden relief with the figure of the Virgin spinning from the Louvre[31] or a pyxis from the Bode Museum,[32] all dated tentatively to the fifth–early sixth centuries on the basis of style. (Figure 1.3).

We can draw several conclusions from these disparate examples. First, in Early Christian art, the iconography of the Annunciation had not yet been fixed, with the result that different visual patterns were applied. The surviving material indicates that a clear iconographic evolution took place

[27] For similar thoughts, see Mazzei, 'Il cubicolo', 266–8.

[28] G. Bovini, *Sarcofagi paleocristiani di Ravenna* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1954), 22–6; J. Kollwitz and H. Herderjürgen, *Die ravennatischen Sarkophage* (Berlin: Mann, 1979), no. B:1, 54–5; I. Baldini Lippolis, 'S. Lorenzo in Cesarea e il problema di lettura iconografica del sarcofago Pignatta', in *1983–1993: Dieci anni di archeologia cristiana in Italia. Atti del VII Congresso nazionale di archeologica cristiana* (Cassino: Università degli Studi di Cassino, 2003), vol. 1, 225–40; C. G. Taylor, 'The Pignatta Sarcophagus: Late Antique Iconography and the Memorial Culture of Salvation', *Biblical Reception* 3 (2015): 30–56; Taylor, *Late Antique Images,* 188–200.

[29] See n. 8 and also G. de Spirito, 'L'Annonciation de Sainte-Marie-Majeure: image apocryphe?', *Apocrypha. International Journal of Apocryphal Litterature* 7 (1996): 273–92; G. Steigerwald, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken des Triumphbogens von S. Maria Maggiore in Rom* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2016), esp. 33–52.

[30] Z. Frantová, *Heresy and Loyalty. The Ivory Diptych of Five Parts from the Cathedral Treasury in Milan* (Brno: Muni Press, 2014).

[31] M.-H. Rutschowscaya and D. Bénazeth (eds.), *L'art copte en Égypte: 2000 ans de christianisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 179, 185, no. 198.

[32] For a good reproduction, see Vassilaki, *Mother of God*, 170; W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz a. Rhein: Von Zabern, 1976), no. 174, 110.

Figure 1.3 Annunciation, so-called Pignatta sarcophagus, late fourth–early fifth century, marble, Ravenna (photo: Cristina Carile).

in the fourth and fifth centuries, which transformed the laconic examples of the Roman catacombs into more detailed and variegated compositions, usually characterised by the inclusion of a basket and loom and by the depiction of Mary making the Temple veil.[33] Secondly, where contexts of use are concerned, while the appearance of the divine messenger before the Virgin could be depicted individually – highlighted as a self-standing subject – it is far more common to see the scene as part of larger Christological cycles.

Although the identification and circulation of Annunciation scenes in Early Christian art are problematic, in part because the examples are scarce, the surviving material of the fourth and fifth century also offers a comparatively wide selection of another version of the Annunciation: the Annunciation at the Spring.[34] Recorded only in the apocryphal texts, this

33 Lidova, 'ΧΑΙΡΕ ΜΑΡΙΑ'.

34 A clear list of surviving examples is provided in Jastrzebowska, *Bild und Wort*. See also E. Jastrzebowska, 'New Testament Angels in Early Christian Art: Origins and Sources',

account narrates the archangel's attempt to approach Mary with the divine message while she is collecting water (*Protevangelium* 11:1–4). In addition to the composition on the 'Marian silk', previously mentioned, we encounter this scene on the fourth-century Adelphia sarcophagus,[35] the early fifth-century Milan diptych[36] and the so-called Werden casket from the Victoria and Albert Museum (which is most probably a Carolingian replica of the fifth-century original).[37] Later renditions include a sixth-century representation on an ampulla from the Holy Land,[38] which besides providing another example of this iconography demonstrates that the Annunciation at the Spring could have circulated as an independent visual motif used on pilgrims' tokens and therefore might also have been associated with a particular sacred site in Nazareth.[39]

When considered together, these artworks attest to the popularity of apocryphal narratives associated with Mary in Early Christian art – on a par with the representations of the crucial events of the canonical Gospels. Furthermore, in the case of the Annunciation in particular, the preference for the apocryphal account might be of certain relevance to the problem of how Early Christians, at least after Constantine, constructed Mary's image and role in religious history and art. On the one hand, the account of the angel approaching the maiden collecting water is full of details reminiscent of daily routine and domestic life. On the other, the Annunciation at the Spring received relatively small attention in the theological tradition, and was always secondary to the dialogue between Mary and Gabriel as it is described in the Gospel of Luke.[40] For the theological treatment, then, it is

Mediterranean and Non-European Archaeology, Światowit 8 (49) (2009–10) (2011), 153–64, esp. 153–5; McNally, 'Syncretism in Panopolis?', 154, n. 30.

35 S. L. Agnello, *Il sarcofago di Adelfia* (Vatican City: Società 'Amici delle catacombe' presso Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1956), 49–71; M. Sgarlata, 'Il Sarcofago di Adelfia', in G. Greco and S. Capella (eds.), *Et lux fuit: Le catacombe e il sarcofago di Adelfia* (Palermo: Arnoldo Lombardi, 1998), 15–54.

36 See n. 30.

37 (Inv. 149–1866) J. Beckwith, 'The Werden Casket Reconsidered', *Art Bulletin* 40/1 (1958): 1–11; Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, no. 118, 83–4; P. Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings: Early Christian to Romanesque* (London: Victoria and Albert Publishing, 2010), 156–8.

38 A. Grabar, *Ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza, Bobbio)* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1958), 52, pl. 31.

39 T. Schmit, 'Blagoveschenie [Annunciation]', *Izvestia Russkogo Archeologicheskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole [Proceedings of the Russian Archeological Institute in Constantinople]* 15 (1911); 31–72, esp. 34–5. On the archaeological state of the site associated with the place of the Annunciation at the Spring today, see A. Yardenna et al., *Mary's Well, Nazareth: The Late Hellenistic to the Ottoman Periods*, vol. 49 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2012).

40 On the theological discourse around the Annunciation at the Spring, see M. Constas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2014), 113–24.

the latter scene that marks the moment of incarnation that occurred when the heavenly messenger addressed the Virgin. The Annunciation at the Spring was by comparison only an anticipatory event, to an extent temporally and contextually detached from the solemn and mysterious moment of the Lord's coming into the world. This means that the images of the Annunciation at the Spring – unlike those of the Annunciation – cannot be read or explained exclusively in Christological terms, as a scene in which God's agency in the world is realised via the medium of the Virgin. Instead, the Annunciation at the Spring possesses a narrative edge that privileges Mary; it is unsurprising, then, that it is this variant of the Annunciation that comes to be primarily associated with her story in the subsequent visual tradition, where it almost exclusively appears in the cycles dedicated to Mary.[41]

The Nativity is a central moment of the New Testament and the event which gave rise to one of the earliest Christian feast-days, recorded in the sources at least as early as the fourth century.[42] Judging from the extant material in Rome, there is a noteworthy difference between the use of this image in painting and in sculpture decoration.[43] While the walls of the catacombs do not preserve representations of Christ's birth, with the only exception found in the catacombs of San Sebastiano,[44] the sarcophagi provide a wide range of examples,[45] leading scholars to believe that the iconography of the scene itself was created in one of the sculptural workshops of the Western capital.[46] As has been demonstrated in previous research, the common features of the early iconography consist in the depiction of the manger containing the body of the baby Jesus often flanked by the ox and ass and figures of the shepherds. In the majority of the surviving examples, the scene of the Nativity occupies the surface of the lid and is placed at the left or right edge of the marble cover. Whenever Mary appears in the scene, she is never represented lying on a mattress as she is commonly portrayed

41 Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique,* 97–8.

42 S. K. Roll, *Towards the Origins of Christmas* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995). H. F. Stander, 'Christmas', in E. Ferguson (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York and London: Garland, 1997–8), 251–2 (with bibliography).

43 For a general overview of the Nativity iconography, see Pokrovskiy, *Evangelie*, 138–90; G. Ristow, *Die Geburt Christi, in der frühchristlichen und byzantinisch-ostkirchlichen Kunst* (Recklinghausen: A. Bongers, 1963).

44 C. Conidi, 'L'arcosolio del presepe nel cimitero di San Sebastiano: A proposito di una pittura recentemente restaurata', *RAChr* 73 (1997): 95–112.

45 D. Milanović, 'L'origine de la scène de la Nativité dans l'art paléochrétien (d'après les sarcophages d'Occident). Catalogue et inteprétation', *Antiquité Tardive* 7 (1999): 299–329.

46 Milanović, 'L'origine', 318–20; F. Bisconti (ed.), *Temi di iconografia cristiana* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2000), 225–8, esp. 226.

Figure 1.4 Nativity and Adoration of the Magi, Adelphia Sarcophagus, second half of the fourth century, marble, Archaeological Museum, Syracuse (photo: David Mauro © Wikemedia Commons).

in the depictions of later centuries, but instead she is seated upright near the cradle with Christ, often placed underneath an open shed. (Figure 1.4).

Much more popular than the Nativity was another composition closely connected to the Bethlehem events, namely, the Adoration of the Magi.[47] Material attestations of this scene exist in the catacomb mural decoration (around nineteen scenes),[48] multiple representations on the sarcophagi (around forty-five),[49] Teano mosaics (fourth century),[50] the silver ewer from the Traprain Law hoard (late fourth or early fifth century),[51] the krater from the National Museum in Rome (late fourth century),[52] the panel of Santa Sabina doors (early fifth century)[53] and many others. (Figure 1.5). This range of images demonstrates that the composition of the Epiphany was extremely popular before the Council of Ephesus. It can be argued that this scene more than any other contributed to shaping the perception of

47 Milanović, 'L'origine'. On the sarcophagi, the Adoration features independently in forty-five examples and is fused with the *Nativity* in about twenty or more cases.

48 The Adoration of the Magi is found in the decoration of the following catacombs: Priscilla, Balbina, San Callisto, Domitilla, dei Giordani, Coemeterium maius, Sts. Marco e Marcelliano, Pietro e Marcellino, di Via Latina, Dino Compagni; see A. Nestori, *Repertorio topografico delle pitture delle catacombe romane* (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1993), 191–2, 194–5; Bisconti, *Il restauro.*

49 J. Wilpert, *I sarcofagi cristiani antichi*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1929–36), vol. 2, 279–91; vol. 3, 48–50, 52–5; F. W. Deichmann, G. Bovini and H. Brandeburg, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, vol. 1: *Rom und Ostia* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967); Milanović, 'L'origine'; Salvadori, *Per feminam mors,* 275–310.

50 R. Calvino, 'Il mosaico di Teano con la scena dell'Epifania e l'epigrafe di Geminia Marciana', *Rendiconti dell'Accademia di Archeologia, Lettere e Belle Arti di Napoli* 58 (1983): 317–23.

51 D. Buckton, *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London: British Museum, 1994), 51; J. Spier and M. Charles Murray (eds.), *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 253–5.

52 Brenk, *The Apse*, 78; C. Gasparri and R. Paris (eds.), *Palazzo Massimo alle Terme. Le collezioni* (Milan: Electa, 2013), 358–9.

53 I. Foletti and M. Gianandrea, *Il nartece di Santa Sabina a Roma, la sua porta e l'iniziazione cristiana* (Rome: Viella, 2015), 158–60.

Figure 1.5 Adoration of the Magi, doors of Santa Sabina, early fifth century, wood, Santa Sabina church, Rome (photo: Center for Early Christian Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic).

Mary and to the promulgation of her, as a holy figure in her own right, in the fourth century.

The story of the three Magi visiting and honouring the new-born King is described in only one of the four canonical Gospels, that of Matthew: 'and going to the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh' (Mt 2:10–11). The mention of Mary is very brief in this account, where she is specified only as the mother of Christ; the story is supplemented, however, by the description of the Magi's pious behaviour before the Child. Already from the earliest representations, such as the mural in the catacombs of Priscilla (Cappella Greca), dated to the late third century,[54] the figure of Mary begins to assume some stature. In them, she is represented seated in a solemn pose with Jesus on her knees accepting the gifts and honours of the wise men.[55] This iconography remains essentially the same for centuries, with only minor variations in the number of Magi, the typology of the vestments or Mary's chair, and so

[54] L. de Bruyne, 'La "capella Greca" di Priscilla', *RAChr* 46 (1970): 291–330.

[55] Wilpert, *I sarcofagi*, vol. 2, 286–7.

on.[56] Multiple interpretations have been provided for the scene's iconography: some scholars highlight the dependence on imperial representations, whereas others offer sophisticated theological and exegetical propositions to describe its visual structure.[57]

Whatever the case, the straightforward message of the Adoration image and its popularity guaranteed its accessibility for Christian viewers. Yet the appearance of this scene within the murals of the catacombs and on sarcophagi is particularly interesting because, unlike various Old Testament compositions, this portion of Gospel narrative does not contain a clear funerary message, nor does it offer a promise of resurrection. The popularity of the Adoration, then, must be explained on different grounds, primarily for its connection to the Nativity and the coming of the Lord. Indeed, fourth-century sculptors often combined the two subjects together on the sarcophagi. The seated pose of Mary from the Late Antique version of the Nativity fits with the complex compositions that unite her figure, the manger and the three Magi approaching the place of Christ's birth. Furthermore, the fusion of the Nativity with the Epiphany is not surprising, since both events follow one another in the Gospel account and were most probably often celebrated together in the Early Church.[58] In the fourth century, the Adoration was often visually linked to the Nativity theme, which means that when represented in isolation it could nevertheless have also referred to the totality of the Bethlehem events. A question arises, though: why did Early Christian artists give preference to the scene of the Adoration over the arguably more important moment of Christ's birth?

It has already been suggested that the Adoration of the Magi scene was an important visual motif in the Early Church that helped convey the idea of reverence for the new-born King.[59] On numerous occasions, Early

[56] On the number of Magi, see M. Mignozzi, 'Su un tema iconografico: L'Adorazione dei due, quattro, sei Magi', *Vetera Christianorum* 49 (2012): 65–100.

[57] There have been several explanations for the popularity of the Adoration of the Magi in early Christian art. Some scholars argue that it represents the incarnation, whereas others consider it to be an image of the conversion of the Gentiles. A third group sees it as a mere reproduction of an imperial iconography. For various points of view with further bibliography, see Salvadori, *Per feminam mors,* 292–3. See also a controversial idea by Thomas Mathews, who suggested that the theme promoted the claim that Christ was a supermagician: T. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 85.

[58] On the cycle of Epiphany feasts in Jerusalem, see R. Avner, 'The Initial Tradition of the Theotokos at the Kathisma: Earliest Celebrations and the Calendar', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 9–30, esp. 19–20.

[59] Mathews, *The Clash of Gods,* 80; Brenk, *The Apse,* 78–9.

Christian theologians invited congregation members to follow the example of the Eastern wise men who, according to the story, were the first to recognise and worship Jesus as Lord.[60] The canonical Gospel account of the Adoration is clearly focused on the figure of Christ and indeed the narrative aspect of the Bethlehem events is well transmitted in the combined versions of the scene, when the Adoration was fused with the Nativity. In the case of the latter, the centre of the composition is occupied by the manger, with the baby Jesus depicted as the recipient of the Eastern wise men's veneration. However, whenever the Adoration appears on its own and shows the Magi before the Virgin seated on the chair with Christ on her lap, the image inevitably acquires additional connotations. This Marian dimension of the Adoration, so clearly expressed visually, has often been denied or overlooked in the previous scholarship.[61] At the same time, earlier scholars have acknowledged that the image of the enthroned Virgin known from later Byzantine art must have derived from the earliest representations of the Virgin seated in a chair found in the Adoration of the Magi compositions.[62]

It is impossible to prove this last point that the Adoration of the Magi scenes influence later depictions of the Virgin directly, especially taking into account that the image of a goddess seated frontally on a throne was typical in the ancient world; it is true that Early Christians could have adopted the general iconography from representations of the Roman gods or of ruling emperors and empresses. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that the Late Antique iconography of the Epiphany did emphasise the figure of Christ's mother and gave her particular relevance within the scene.[63] In fact, the images of the Adoration show how the visual narrative could complement and enrich textual accounts by shifting what is accented or even sometimes by creating additional meanings. The fact that the presence and importance of Mary in the Adoration scene was well acknowledged and intentionally highlighted in art finds confirmation in other artworks. A sixth- or seventh-century gold brooch from a grave near Medellín, now in Madrid, bears an

[60] See the discussion in my forthcoming paper: M. Lidova, 'The Virgin Mary and Adoration of the Magi: From Iconic Space to Icon in Space'.

[61] For the necessity to see the Marian dimension of this image, see Salvadori, *Per feminam mors,* 268–71.

[62] C. Belting- Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom vierten Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des achten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1960), 52–68; E. Barclay Lloyd, 'Mary, Queen of Angels: Byzantine and Roman Images of the Virgin and Child Enthroned with Attendant Angels', *Melbourne Art Journal* 5 (2001): 5–24, esp. 5–7.

[63] Interestingly enough, in a number of cases in the scene of the Adoration on the sarcophagi, the baby Jesus is represented facing Mary and not the Magi; this contributes to the impression that it was the Virgin who accepted the gifts of the wise men.

image of the Adoration accompanied by a short Greek prayer, addressed not to Jesus, as might be expected, but to the Virgin: 'Saint Maria, help the wearer. Amen.'[64] Even more significant in this regard are literary sources that provide commentary on the Bethlehem events. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, for example, John Chrysostom (349–407) underlines that Mary is important and deserves to be honoured together with her Son: 'And this makes the Virgin also in no common degree glorious and distinguished; that the very thing which was the whole people's special endowment in the way of praise, she also might henceforth have for her own. … He makes this pre-eminence belong to the Virgin likewise.'[65]

To state that the narrative compositions featuring Mary in fourth-century art indicate the existence of an independent cult of the Virgin would be too bold, especially since understandings of what constitutes the 'cult' remain sufficiently vague and polarised in scholarship.[66] In spite of this, the individual representations of the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Adoration do demonstrate that Mary gradually became indispensable to narrations of Christ's story. Some earlier versions of the Nativity and the Miracle at Cana, for example, do not include the figure of the Virgin, who is introduced only at a later stage when the related iconographies acquire their more definite forms. Alternative iconographic solutions and visual patterns did exist and the development of the theological and liturgical traditions connected to Mary must have influenced the appearance and promulgation of her image in art. Simultaneously and inversely, the narratives created on the walls of the churches and surfaces of the sarcophagi also told and popularised the story of Mary, paving the way for the later, fully developed forms of Marian worship.

Infancy and Marian Cycles in Early Christian Art

Besides their appearance in individual compositions in the catacombs and in sarcophagi decoration, images of Mary were often incorporated

[64] H. Schlunk and T. Hauschild, *Die Denkmäler der frühchristlichen und westgotischen Zeit* (Mainz am Rhein: Zabern, 1978), 156, pl. 49a; J. D. Dodds, B. F. Reilly and J. W. Williams, *The Art of Medieval Spain: AD 500–1200* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), 42; B. Ager, 'Byzantine Influences on Visigothic Jewellery', in C. Entwistle and A. Noël (eds.), *Intelligible Beauty: Recent Research on Byzantine Jewellery* (London: British Museum, 2010), 72–82, esp. 74–5.

[65] P. Schaff (ed.), *NPNF* 10: Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, 53.

[66] For some general considerations on the matter see A. Cameron, 'Introduction', in Brubaker and Cunningham, *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, 1–5.

into larger narrative cycles. In some ways, the construction of visual sequences of different historical moments in Christian art can be compared to the creation of human biographies: a story could acquire particular meanings beyond its basic plot via the choice of subjects depicted and their arrangement in a space or on the surface of an artwork. Viewers, in turn, were expected to participate in the construction of a multifaceted message, through the movement of their gaze from one representation to another. At the same time, the sequence could – because of its realisation within a given space – also achieve an effect of an all-encompassing vision of a complete narrative, enriched by multiple minor details and intentional compositional and iconographic parallels incorporated into the pictorial 'text'. Furthermore, once the same figure appears in several compositions, it inevitably acquires the role of the protagonist of the cycle, holding the narrative together and helping the viewer to identify key moments in the sacred story and to find connections between the different scenes.

Often, the Infancy cycles are seen as being primarily focused on Christ, with Mary's role being limited to a mediatory function in the mystery of incarnation.[67] In the first Roman church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, Santa Maria Maggiore, the choice was made to decorate the arch, framing the space of the altar, with the narrative cycle dedicated to Christ's Childhood. Four major scenes of this cycle feature Mary: the Annunciation, Adoration of the Magi, Presentation to the Temple and the enigmatic scene showing the holy family before the gates of a city.[68] Two scenes in the lower register of the decoration complement the cycle with the Massacre of the Innocents and the Magi before Herod. Since the Santa Maria Maggiore decoration has been exhaustively studied I will limit myself to a few important observations. Within the mosaics of the church, Mary's rich attire, a white tunic and golden *dalmatica*, emphasise her position as a high-ranking woman of aristocratic family.[69] Irrespective of whether or not Mary was also depicted in

67 J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, 'Iconography of the Cycle of the Infancy of Christ', in P. A. Underwood (ed.), *The Kariye Djami*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 1975), vol. 4, 197–241.

68 The suggestion made at the end of the nineteenth century identifies the scene with the Encounter with Aphrodisius, governor of Soutinen in Egypt (Ps-Mt 22–4); see N. Kondakov, *Histoire de l'art byzantin considéré principalement dans les miniatures,* trans. M. Trawinski, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie de l'Art, 1886–91), vol. 1, 105–6. For detailed historiography and an alternative, though even less convincing, interpretation, see S. Spain, '"The Promised Blessing": The Iconography of the Mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore', *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979): 518–40, esp. 519–25, n. 7. Most recently, Steigerwald has suggested another interpretation of this composition as a meeting between Christ and Emperor Augustus; see Steigerwald, *Die frühchristlichen Mosaiken*, 96–111.

69 For a detailed discussion of this type of costume characteristic of a number of Late Antique female representations, see K. Schade, *Frauen in der Spätantike – Status und*

the conch of the apse, which remains a matter of debate in scholarship, this rendering, together with other visual and compositional devices, helps to highlight her representation within the pictorial narrative. It can be said that the Marian figure obtains a relevance in the cycle beyond that required by an attempt to visualise the Gospel story. But was the importance of her figure actually acknowledged at the time of image creation?

Today, the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore remain the only surviving evidence for the Infancy cycle in the monumental art of the pre-Iconoclastic period. However, minor works of art, above all ivories, textiles and metalwork, as well as textual sources, indicate that the multi-compositional arrangements must have been quite common in early Byzantine church decoration. Important evidence is provided by the sixth-century description of Chorikios of the painted cycle on the ceiling of the St Sergios church in Gaza:

> I shall set aside the pictures (*historiai*) that are on the walls, and shall pass up to the ceiling. A winged being has just descended from heaven in the painter's [fancy] and comes to her who will be a mother without a husband; she is not yet a mother as he finds her modestly spinning and greets her with the good tidings. … Startled by the unexpected vision, she suddenly turns round in her confusion and nearly lets fall the purple from her hand, the joints of her fingers weakened by fear. Her female sex and the innocence of her years – she was a maiden of marriageable age – trouble her and make her suspicious of the salutation. The angel having accomplished his mission, has flown away. She now goes out of her chamber to visit a kinswoman and friend, and is about to tell her what has happened; the latter anticipates her through premonition and falls on the maiden's breast. Indeed, she strives to go down on her knees, but the Virgin, in her humility, holds her up.[70]

This account of the Annunciation and Visitation scenes is followed by descriptions of the Nativity, Presentation and Miracle at Cana, in which the author stresses the presence and actions of the Virgin at each event.[71] The Chorikios text is unique because it provides an *ekphrasis* with an interpretation of a visual narrative that dates nearly to the works discussed in this chapter. While the Chorikios evidence and the monument he described are

Repräsentation: eine Untersuchung zur römischen und frübyzantinischen Bildniskunst (Mainz am Rhein: Zabern, 2003), 107–12. See also: Lidova, 'The Imperial *Theotokos*'.

70 C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 64–6.

71 J. Reil, *Die altchristlichen Bildzyklen des Lebens Jesu* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1910), 112; T. Polański, 'The Cycles of Childhood and Miracles in Saint Sergius' Church of Gaza in the *Ecphrasis* of Choricius', in *Hortus Historiae: Studies dedicated to Prof. Jozef Wolski* (Krakow: Historia Iagellonica, 2010), 737–57.

Figure 1.6 Annunciation at the Spring, Mary with two women, Mary enthroned, Adelphia Sarcophagus, second half of fourth century, marble, Archaeological Museum, Syracuse (photo: David Mauro © Wikemedia Commons).

dated to the sixth century, when the veneration of the Virgin was already fully established in the Roman Empire, it can be argued that earlier cycles would have been read similarly by late antique viewers as acknowledging the Virgin's individual agency within broader visual frameworks.

The existence of Early Christian cycles that were specifically Marian in their choice of subjects further substantiates this point.[72] The earliest and most revealing example is found in the Adelphia sarcophagus from Syracuse, dated to the fourth century.[73] (Figures 1.4 and 1.6). The lid of the tomb is decorated with a sequence of four scenes, which all feature Mary. The short narrative develops from left to right and opens with the Annunciation at the Spring. The next scene shows Mary standing upright with her steps and gaze directed to the right; two female figures flank her and gently hold her arms. In the next composition, the garments of Mary are different: she is no longer wearing a belted *tunica* and her head is covered by a veil. She is represented seated on the throne surrounded by four women. Judging by their gestures, the three figures on the left venerate the Virgin while a woman on the right is represented in a contemplative and thoughtful mood, touching her chin with the fingers of her right hand. The sequence is interrupted by a dedicatory inscription carried by two putti and is concluded on the other side by a composition of the Nativity combined with the Adoration of the Magi. The figure of Mary seated on a rock and wearing vestments similar to those worn by the woman on the throne in the previous scene becomes the final image of the sequence.

[72] J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *L'iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire byzantine et en Occident*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Palais des académies, 1964–65); Lafontaine-Dosogne, 'Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin', 163–94. It is noteworthy how the author also connects the interest in the events of the life of Mary with the spread of the cult of the Virgin after the Council of Ephesus (p. 164). However, several Marian cycles discussed in this chapter were made in the fourth century or at the turn of the fifth.

[73] See n. 35 and also the discussion in Brenk, *The Apse*, 64–6.

Figure 1.7 Marian and Christological cycle, so-called Werden casket, ca. 800, imitating a fifth-century original, ivory, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (photo © Victoria and Albert Museum).

The uniqueness of the second and third scenes makes it difficult to associate them with any particular Gospel event. Furthermore, the iconographic solutions of each are heavily dependent on non-Christian prototypes and do reappear widely in subsequent centuries, which has led scholars to debate the subjects of the scenes and the heroine's identification as Mary. When the cycle is carefully studied as a whole, however, it becomes clear that the frieze is not a combination of random scenes, but instead follows a particular logic and takes Mary as its unifying figure and central focus.

The existence of cycles from the fourth and early fifth century that represent the Virgin as the principal character in their programmes is also confirmed by the Abegg-Stiftung textile, mentioned in the first part of this chapter, and the carvings of the Werden casket at the Victoria and Albert Museum.[74] (Figure 1.7). The Werden casket is an ivory box covered with images of the Infancy cycle of an unusual kind. In this cycle, once more, the story opens with the Annunciation at the Spring, followed by the Dream of Joseph with the Virgin standing nearby, the Visitation, and Mary before the angel pointing towards the temple, before which we can see a bearded male figure holding an open book. The latter scene is often identified with the preparation of Mary before the Trial of Bitter Waters, although other readings are also possible.

The so-called Visitation is rendered in an unconventional way, with three figures represented instead of two. Mary is depicted standing in the centre and communicating with a woman before her, who must be Elizabeth.

[74] See n. 37.

Another woman, most likely the maid, if we accept the identification of the scene, stands behind the Virgin. This composition bears a great similarity to the arrangement of the second scene on the lid of the Adelphia sarcophagus which shows Mary in the company of two female figures. Like the arrangement of the Syracuse sarcophagus, the other side of the Werden casket also continues with the detailed Nativity, starting with the Magi seeing the star (or possibly the shepherds) on the left, the manger with Jesus protected by Joseph and Mary seated on either side, and finally the Adoration before the Virgin and Child. Only one plaque, dedicated to John the Baptist, survives from the two other, much shorter sides of the casket.

Subsequently, and despite the paucity of surviving examples in church decoration, the Marian cycles became very popular and widespread in Christian art. The sixth-century Byzantine ivory covers bear witness to the development of this tradition.[75] (Figure 1.8). According to convention, one leaf showed Christ surrounded by representations of the miracles, the Entry into Jerusalem and other scenes. However, the counterpart frontal panel would have borne the image of the Virgin enthroned with the Child on the central plaque accompanied by approximately six narrative compositions. The choice of subjects for the plaques, besides the Nativity and the Annunciation, often includes the Trial by Water, the Flight to Egypt, the Visitation and, at least in one case, even the Annunciation to St Anne.[76] The selection for the Gospel ivory covers was clearly made in such a way as to represent Mary in all the narrative compositions on one side and Christ's actions on the other, which means that the artists were consciously creating 'Marian' and 'Christological' narrative series in their treatments of the codex covers of the Gospel texts.

An extremely interesting Marian cycle once decorated the Chapel LI in Bawit.[77] Four walls of a rectangular room at the heart of the monastery complex were richly decorated with murals tentatively dated either to the sixth–seventh or eighth–ninth century. The apse was situated in the centre of the eastern wall and contained the image of Christ surrounded by four living creatures. The northern wall consisted of a two-register

[75] J. Lowden, 'The Word Made Visible: The Exterior of the Early Christian Books as Visual Argument', in W. E. Klingshirn and L. Safran (eds.), *The Early Christian Book* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 13–47.

[76] K. Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), 511–12.

[77] J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1999), 109–32; G. J. M. Van Loon, 'The Virgin and the Midwife Salomé', *Eastern Christian Art* 3 (2006): 81–104, esp. 82–9.

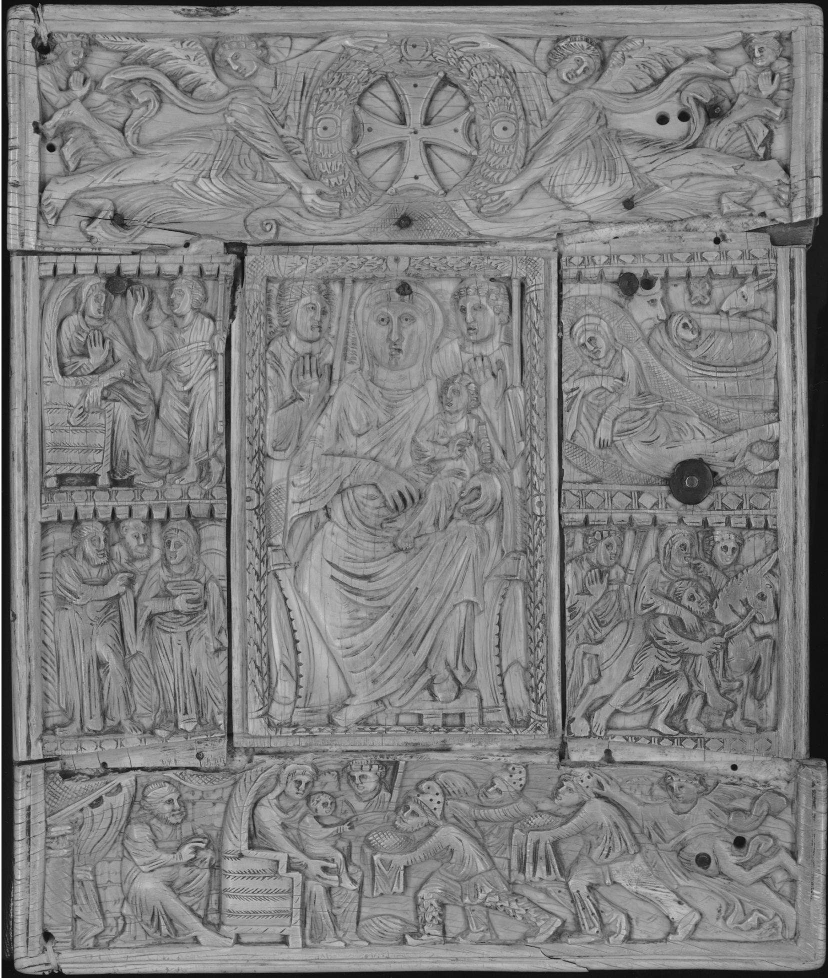

Figure 1.8 Virgin enthroned with Child Christ and narrative scenes, five-part ivory cover of Etchmiadzin Gospels, Matenadaran library (Ms. 2374), sixth century, Yerevan, Armenia (photo: © 'Matenadaran' Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts).

decoration: in the top register, the father Apollo and his friends Anoup and Phib were represented seated on a bench and accompanied by the figures of standing saints and monks. Below this composition was a narrative frieze depicting four Gospel events, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Journey to Bethlehem and the Nativity. The cycle in general was characterised by an extensive use of captions and the figure of the Virgin was accompanied by the name 'Η ΑΓΙΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ'. In every moment of the story, Mary was depicted as a protagonist of the scene, an impression achieved by the slightly enlarged proportions of her figure and the

compositional arrangement. The Virgin also becomes the principal character because the figure of Child Christ is absent from the cycle. Given that the northern wall was situated opposite the entrance, the composition of the Marian cycle would have confronted the viewer upon entering. The Bawit cycle is remarkable as an example of early medieval Marian narrative in monumental decoration because it distinctly demonstrates that the Infancy cycles were, at times, treated as stories about the figure and agency of the Mother of God.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to bring together material evidence for imagery of the Virgin dated to the period before the Council of Ephesus, that is, to the fourth and early fifth centuries. The surviving images come from both the Eastern and Western parts of the Empire and testify to the early development of Marian representations in Christian art. At times Mary can be identified by an inscription, appearing alone or in the company of other saints; more commonly, the Virgin is represented in narrative compositions connected either to the Infancy of Christ or stories from the apocrypha. While neither type of evidence can be taken as proof of a developed Marian cult, especially because the surviving material is fragmentary and uneven in terms of both quality and function, it would nonetheless be incorrect to deny Mary's relevance in the period before the Council of Ephesus. On the contrary, the textual and material evidence counters the popular viewpoint that early visual culture and theology are characterised exclusively by Christological concerns. Although we cannot know if the figure of Mary was chosen to help substantiate claims for the human nature of Christ or for another reason, it is evident that by the end of the fourth century her image had become indispensable to representations of the Gospel story.

From the vantage point of the present, it is impossible to reconstruct the motivations and ideas behind the cycle of the Adelphia sarcophagus or the Marian apocryphal stories that decorate late antique vestments and textiles. Tentatively, however, it is possible to suggest that in some cases commissions made by women or for women could have influenced the choice of Mary-related subjects, particularly where funerary settings are concerned. For the most part, however, our knowledge of what motivated Early Christian Marian iconography is limited, especially because we are missing the crucial chapter of material attestations from the Holy Land,

where numerous pilgrimage sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth were associated with Mary and were in active use in the fourth century.[78]

Since the disparate examples collected in this chapter could give the misleading and inaccurate impression that imagery featuring the Virgin was already central in the fourth century, it must be reiterated that the quantity of Marian representations that survive is rather modest in comparison with the overall legacy of Early Christian art. Moreover, the span of Marian themes is variegated and represents the development of only one of many trajectories of late antique visual culture. It is clear, however, that by the time of the Council of Ephesus, the visual thesaurus of Marian representations was developed sufficiently to allow for the creation of sophisticated monumental decorations and individual representations. Interestingly, we do not witness any major transformation in Marian imagery in the aftermath of the Council, apart from the increased number of the churches dedicated to her and the growing popularity of her image.

In other words, the artistic evidence does not seem to point to the radical modification of an already existing image in order better to reflect the theological concept of Mary as *Theotokos*.[79] In spite of this, the devotional significance of the representations of the Virgin and Child did gradually change after the Council, to the point that by the sixth century the images of Mary enthroned had become one of the principal icons of the state. Following the logic of this transition, then, it can be established that in the Early Christian period more narrative treatment of Mary's figure developed towards the formulation of more iconic and sacred representations of the Virgin – a shift which reflects the passage in the perception of Mary from maiden of the Gospel accounts to protagonist of Christian worship.

[78] F. Cabrol, *Les églises de Jérusalem, la discipline et la liturgie au IVe siècle* (Paris: H. Oudin, 1895); Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith*.

[79] On the concept and its scarce relevance for the Council, see Price, 'The Virgin as Theotokos at Ephesus'.

2 Female Devotion and Mary's Motherhood before Iconoclasm

ANDREA OLSEN LAM

Marian narrative scenes are depicted in various monumental and small-scale examples before Iconoclasm, in both public and private contexts. In general, pre-Iconoclastic Marian narrative depictions are understood to convey theology with a chiefly educational purpose and are not believed to have served a devotional function in the same manner as post-Iconoclastic icons. This is due to the fact that while texts from the period discuss the education value of sacred narrative,[1] and the apotropaic, or magical, function of some imagery has been demonstrated through pagan precedents,[2] secure evidence for Marian narrative depictions used for devotional purposes is scarce. Though some small-scale objects, such as wedding bands and pilgrimage-related objects have been studied with regard to private meaning and devotion,[3] the potential for narrative scenes (not only hieratic, icon-like depictions) to convey personal concerns or facilitate veneration during the pre-Iconoclastic period has not been thoroughly investigated. The subject is significant in relation to the early Marian cult, because it demonstrates the variety and freedom with which Marian imagery was employed, particularly on private objects. This chapter investigates a group of small-scale, personal objects that depict the incarnation narrative in a manner that highlights the Virgin's singular

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[1] Certain monumental narrative representations of Marian narrative, such as the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and the apsidal mosaics at Poreč, are interpreted as depictions that reflect the doctrinal concerns of the church. E.g. A. Terry and H. Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2007), 59–60, 69, 129–33.

[2] E.g. see G. Vikan, 'Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium', *DOP* 38 (1984): 81–4, n. 109; Vikan, 'Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium', *DOP* 44 (1990): 158; A. Walker, 'Myth and Magic in Early Byzantine Marriage Jewelry', in A. L. McClanan and K. Rosoff Encarnación (eds.), *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 59–78.

[3] H. Maguire, 'The Cult of the Mother of God in Private', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens and Milan: Skira, 2000), 280–2.

importance as a devotional figure, sometimes incorporating inscriptions and imagery that appeals especially to female devotees. In addition to their didactic and apotropaic (or magical) functions, which have been accepted by scholars for decades,[4] new evidence presented here demonstrates how personal objects functioned as meaningful instruments of Marian veneration before Iconoclasm, a subject for which there is limited material evidence.[5] The textiles discussed here are from Egypt, where the climate has led to better preservation of fabrics; however, the study also includes gold medallions that probably originated in Constantinople and eastern Anatolia, thus reflecting the broad geographical scope of Marian imagery in pre-Iconoclastic Byzantium.

Marian Images and Monastic Education

Sources that discuss the use of religious images in Late Antiquity are rare, and those that describe the function of Marian imagery are particularly uncommon. One such text comes from the fifth-century Egyptian abbot Shenoute of Atripe. In his catechetical text, 'And It Happened One Day' (dated ca. 455, after the Council of Chalcedon and before Shenoute's death in 466), the leader of the White Monastery instructs his listeners regarding Mary's role as Theotokos by referring to embroidered images as proofs and witnesses of Christ's pre-existence before the incarnation and 'the birth of the Saviour and his divinity'.[6] Shenoute does not specify whether the images were narrative or non-narrative depictions, but he states that the figures were labelled with their names, and that he and his monastic brothers used the textiles to teach about the apostles, prophets and 'Mary the God-bearer'. In addition to this didactic use of images

[4] E.g. see A. Grabar, *Les ampoules de Terre Sainte (Monza, Bobbio)* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1958); H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995); G. Vikan, 'Art, Medicine and Magic in Early Byzantium', *DOP* 38 (1984): 65–86.

[5] See S. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[6] Ed. L. T. Lefort, 'Catéchèse christologique de Chenoute', *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 80 (1955), 40–5, esp. 42–3; trans. S. J. Davis, *Coptic Christology in Practice: Incarnation and Divine Participation in Late Antique and Medieval Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), appendix A2, 286–8; S. J. Davis, 'Fashioning a Divine Body: Coptic Christology and Ritualized Dress', *HThR* 98.3 (2005): 352, n. 29, 353. Scholarship often assumes an educational function of narrative images, even if late ancient texts rarely describe their functions in religious settings so explicitly.

that Shenoute describes, the following examples will demonstrate how, particularly on private objects, Marian narrative images could be subtly modified to reflect and address the concerns of the wearers or people for whom they were created, such that they conveyed personal, as well as theological, meanings.

The Adana Medallions

The Adana medallions in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul are two identical gold medallions that measure 3.2 inches (8.2 cm) in diameter (Figures 2.1–2). The fact that there are two identical medallions may suggest serial production, whether they were stamped *en masse* or stamped and finished individually. Said to have been found in the homonymous city in eastern Turkey, the Adana medallions are embossed on each side with three bands of narrative scenes surrounded by an ornamental border and rimmed with beaded decoration. The medallions have been dated to around the year 600 based on comparisons with the ampullae in Monza and Bobbio and other roughly contemporaneous works.[7] One side portrays the first events of the incarnation, while the other side depicts the miracles of Christ (Figure 2.3); scenes on both sides are accompanied by identifying inscriptions. The scenes of the incarnation are both Marian and Christological in their significance: Mary is the Theotokos through whom the divine incarnation occurred, for which reason she is also the intercessor to Christ.

[7] The Adana medallions' provenance is not archaeologically documented, though their authenticity is not disputed. The earliest publications of the medallions only state that they are believed to come from Adana in southern Turkey. Iconographic details that favour a date around 600 include the busts of the apostles encircling the miracles on the medallion, which closely resemble a similar border on three ampullae in the treasuries at Monza and Bobbio. However, certain details of the Adana medallions have been identified as specifically seventh-century trademarks, such as the shepherd with crossed legs in the Annunciation to the Shepherds scene, combined with frontally disposed, slightly misshapen figures, as on a censer in Berlin. Other features further connect them with the *loca sancta* and pilgrimage in Palestine, such as the representation of Christ in the manger, which includes a hanging lamp like those noted by pilgrims in their accounts of the holy places they visited. H. Pierce and R. Tyler, *L'Art byzantin* (Paris: Librarie de France, 1934), vol. 2, 94–5, pl. 73b; A. B. Yalçin, 'I due medaglioni di Adana nel Museo Archeologico di Istanbul', in A. Iacobini and E. Zanini (eds.), *Arte profana e arte sacra a Bisanzio* (Rome: Argos, 1995), 526–7; I. Richter-Siebels, *Die palästinensischen Weihrauchgefässe mit Reliefszenen aus dem Leben Christi* (Berlin: Inaugural Dissertation, Free University, Berlin, 1990), 253. Already at the very end of the fourth century, Egeria noted the lamps used in Jerusalem festival processions and for practical purposes (*Itinerarium Egeriae* 24.4, 7, 9; 25.7–8; 43.7; *Egeria's Travels*, trans. J. Wilkinson, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002), and a hanging lamp was routinely included in Nativity scenes on the ampullae in Monza and Bobbio.

Figure 2.1 Istanbul, Archaeological Museum. Adana medallion with scenes of the incarnation (photo: Henry Maguire). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

Figure 2.2 Istanbul, Archaeological Museum. Adana medallions. Left: Christological scenes of the incarnation; right: Christ's miracles (photo: after H. Pierce and R. Tyler, *L'Art Byzantin*, 1934).

The top register portrays the Annunciation and Visitation, accompanied by an abbreviated (and misspelled) version of Gabriel's greeting to Mary, 'Hail, favoured one, the Lord is with you' (ΧΕΡΕ ΚΑΙΧΑΡΙΤΟΜΕΝΙ Ο ΚΥΡΙΟC ΜΕΤΑ).[8] At the far left of the register is a kneeling veiled figure, presumably bowing in devotion to the Virgin. The middle register depicts Christ in a manger with a lamp hanging above, which previous studies have linked to the lamp that is frequently depicted over the altar at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the altar was typically portrayed as a brick-built manger).[9] Christ is overseen by two animals (with the inscription, 'in the manger', ΠΑΘΝΙ, presumably a misspelling of ΦΑΤΝΗ), then Mary and Christ riding on a donkey led by Joseph to Egypt, symbolised by a domed building (inscribed, 'Joseph [in] Egypt', ΙΩΣΗΦ ΑΙΓΥΠΤΟΣ); the bottom register portrays a shepherd leaning on a staff as he gestures heavenward to a star, while three Persian-capped Magi offer gifts to the enthroned Mary and Christ at the far right, accompanied by the injunction, 'Behold, the King' (ΙΔΕΟ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ).[10] A veiled figure crouches at the far left of the lower register, facing away from the figures that worship Christ. The left-facing (probably) female figure may have been incised backwards accidentally, originally intended as a kneeling devotee worshipping Christ and Mary with the Magi; the figure may also be kneeling before Christ in the manger, depicted above, in the middle register.[11] The second kneeling figure may be intended to represent the same anonymous devotee as shown above. The absence of such devotees from the side of the medallion depicting Christ's miracles (with the exception of the crouching woman with the issue of blood, who participates in the narrative) further accentuates the personal, devotional function of the Marian narrative on the Adana medallions.

The brief inscriptions that accompany the scenes illuminate the narrative and also cue the beholders' responses; in particular, three details suggest that the narrative scenes on these palm-sized medallions served not only as educational reminders of the sacred story, but also as devotional aids. First,

8 The Adana medallions' inscription is an abbreviated version of Lk 1:28, Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ ('Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you').

9 These iconographic details may connect the medallions to the actual holy sites in and around Jerusalem. K. Weitzmann, '"Loca Sancta" and the Representational Arts of Palestine', *DOP* 28 (1974): 37.

10 Yalçin, 'I due medaglioni', 528.

11 Yalçin considers Elizabeth and Rachel as possible candidates for this figure's identity. However, the Adana medallions depict no other narrative elements of Herod's massacre of the innocents; the figure has not been conclusively identified. Yalçin, 'I due medaglioni', 534. Other authors identify the figure variously. See D. T. Rice, *The Art of Byzantium* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1959), 302, cat. no. 66.

most scenes are labelled with their names (a practice that became common for biblical narrative scenes after Iconoclasm), while the Annunciation and Visitation scenes are instead accompanied by Gabriel's greeting to Mary, which were the first words of a prayer that was already well known in the fourth century.[12] The Liturgy of Saint Mark combines Gabriel's and Elizabeth's greetings to Mary in a single prayer that mirrors the juxtaposition of the Annunciation and Visitation in the top register: 'Hail, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'[13] The initial words of the prayer on the medallion may have prompted a viewer to recite the entire prayer, so that the combination of imagery and inscription succeeded in presenting Mary as the recipient of devotion. That the beholder would respond to the first scenes of the incarnation with Gabriel's salutation is suggested by its prominent place in the liturgical prayer discussed above. An expanded version of this prayer was inscribed in Greek on an ostracon contemporaneous with the medallions (i.e. around AD 600), found at Luxor in Egypt, suggesting its broader usage by the early seventh century:

> Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with you, the Holy Spirit too. Your priests shall be robed in justice, they that honor you shall rejoice and exult. For David's sake, your servant, Lord, save, Lord, your people, bless your chosen portion. Hail to the glorious virgin, Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed you are above all other women and blessed is the fruit of your womb: for he whom you conceived was Christ, the Son of God, and he has redeemed our souls.[14]

The presence of this prayer on the ostracon suggests its use in informal, private devotional settings, a domestic counterpart to the prayer's use in

[12] This is also observed in the Annunciation scene on the inside of the reliquary of the True Cross in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where Gabriel's greeting is abbreviated similarly: 'Hail, full of grace!' (ΧΑΙΡΕΣ ΧΑΡΙΤΟΜ). B. Ratliff and H. C. Evans (eds.), *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th–9th Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), fig. 37, cat. no. 54. For another look into the integration of New Testament readings into public worship, private devotion and liturgy, see F. Harley, 'The Narration of Christ's Passion in Early Christian Art', in J. Burke (ed.), *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott* (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2006), 221–32, esp. 230–1.

[13] Lk 1:28, 42. *Liturgy of Saint Mark*, ed. G. J. Cuming, OCA 234 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1990), 29.

[14] W. E. Crum, *Coptic Ostraca: From the Collections of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Cairo Museum and Others* (Boston and London: Gilbert & Rivington, 1902), 1, 3. Some scholars have argued that this ostracon furnishes evidence for the private use of this prayer, while others maintain its importance was limited to the liturgy. See N. Ayo, *The Hail Mary* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 6–7; H. Thurston, 'The Origins of the Hail Mary', in P. Grosjean (ed.), *Familiar Prayers, their Origin and History* (London: Burns Oates, 1953), 92–3.

liturgical services.[15] In effect, the first words of the Marian prayer on the Adana medallions, coupled with the narrative images, facilitated Marian adoration for their wearers.

This interpretation of the medallions' function is strengthened by a second detail that associates the Adana medallions with the devotional realm: the small kneeling figure at the far left of the top register, and, to a lesser extent, the kneeling figure in the bottom register. Such figures are typically viewed as a proxy for the wearer or viewer; given the existence of two identical medallions and the absence of personalised inscriptions, the kneeling figures cannot be precisely identified. However, the fact that both kneeling devotees are veiled indicates that the medallions were probably made for women.

A third aspect of the Adana medallions that promotes devotion is the reordering of the incarnation events. The holy family's journey to Egypt, which here follows the image of Christ in the manger, is usually portrayed after the visits of the shepherds and the Magi to Christ, in keeping with the narrative recorded in Matthew 2.[16] In this case, the incarnation events have been resequenced, probably in order to give Mary pride of place at the centre of the medallions, while simultaneously allotting more space for the Magi's adoration of Christ and the Virgin in the lower register.[17] The journey of Mary with Christ on the donkey is emphasised by the trees that subtly frame the donkey and by the placement of Mary and Christ at the centre of both medallions.

A final modification is observed in the Nativity scene, which omits Mary, who typically reclines on a mattress, attended by Salome. The scene is identified by the inscription 'In the manger', referring to Christ, rather than with a typical inscription that assumes Mary's presence, such as 'the Nativity' (Η ΓΕΝΑ). This curious abbreviation of the Nativity scene may seem an egregious omission, if it were not for the emphasis on Mary elsewhere and her central position in the middle register. The modifications observed create visual harmony on the palm-sized medallions, while also portraying Mary as the literal Bearer of God and as a worthy recipient of devotion, as indicated by the first words of the prayer to the Virgin.

Mary's role as the Mother of God is inseparable from her identity as intercessor to the miracle-working Christ who is portrayed on the two

[15] See Georgia Frank's chapter in this volume, which investigates the laity's participation in Marian kontakia.

[16] Henry Maguire proposes that the central placement of the Virgin and Christ on the donkey serves a protective purpose, echoing holy rider amulets, but he does not consider the devotional significance of the kneeling devotees or the Marian prayer. Nor does he mention that the holy rider amulets do not generally portray sequences of narrative scenes. See Maguire, 'Cult of the Mother of God in Private', 280.

[17] Yalçin, 'I due medaglioni', 531.

Figure 2.3 Munich, Christian Schmidt Collection. Gold marriage medallion (photo: Dr Christian Schmidt).

medallions' opposite sides. The wearers of the Adana medallions probably also hoped for similar miracles and healing, most importantly resurrection and eternal life, as portrayed in the miracle of the raising of Lazarus.[18] In summary, the Marian prayer and scenes depicted on the Adana medallions may be read as facilitating devotion to the Virgin as an intercessor to Christ. The kneeling female devotees, coupled with the inscribed address to Mary – which may be used as the cue for a longer prayer – together indicate the use of these objects as devotional aids for women.

The Schmidt Medallion

The Schmidt medallion combines traditional Roman marriage imagery with Marian scenes and biblical verses that reflect the bridal couple's hope

[18] The miracles depicted on the Adana medallions include: the healing of the man born blind (Jn 9:1–39) and the healing of the leper (Mt 8:1–4; Mk 1:40–5; Lk 5:12–14) in the top register; the middle register depicts the woman with the issue of blood (Mt 9:20), the paralytic (Jn 5:1–15), and the demon-possessed man (Mk 1:23, Mt 12:12, Lk 11:14); the bottom register portrays the raising of Lazarus (Jn 9:1–44) and Jesus with the woman at the well (Jn 4:1–26), two narratives that refer to resurrection and eternal life. These scenes are surrounded by fourteen busts, best identified as the twelve apostles with Christ (at the centre, top) and Mary (at the centre, bottom), each separated by a simple scroll design. An abbreviated inscription accompanies each of the miracle scenes.

for a fruitful, peaceful marriage. Except for its delicately punched border, the gold medallion resembles commemorative coins and medallions struck at the time of imperial Roman and early Byzantine marriages; such objects were often worn for good luck and protection from misfortune.[19] One side of the Schmidt medallion portrays Christ's arms around a bride and groom, whose hands are joined in the *dextrarum iunctio*, the traditional Roman gesture of marriage;[20] under their feet is a scrolling vine growing out of an amphora (Figure 2.3). The bride and groom are not named, as occurs on some Roman marriage medallions. The couple's refined garments and jewellery situate this gold medallion within an aristocratic or courtly context; it probably dates to the last decades of the sixth century or early seventh century based on similarities with the Dumbarton Oaks medallion, which is dated to 583/4.[21] Instead of the inscription commonly found on both pagan and Christian marriage medallions and rings, OMONIA (harmony),[22] the inscription around the bridal couple reads, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you',[23] introducing Christ's blessing to his apostles (spoken the night before his crucifixion) into the marriage context.[24]

On the opposite side, the scene of the Annunciation occupies approximately two-thirds of the medallion's face. Gabriel approaches from the left,

[19] H. Maguire, 'Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages', *Speculum* 72 (1997): 1037–54.

[20] 'Dextrarum iunctio', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (1957), vol. 3, 881–8; E. Kantorowicz, 'On the Golden Marriage Belt and the Golden Rings of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection', *DOP* 14 (1960): 4–5. For Roman examples of the iconography, see J. M. C. Toynbee, *Roman Medallions* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1986): 96–8.

[21] M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, vol. 2: *Jewelry, Enamels, and Art of the Migration Period* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1965, 2nd ed. with addendum by S. A. Boyd and S. R. Zwirn, 2005), 33–5 cat. no. 36.

[22] OMONIA (harmony) is frequently inscribed on late Roman and early Byzantine marriage jewellery, expressing the couple's wish for peace and harmony in the marriage. See I. Kalavrezou and A. Laiou (eds.), *Byzantine Women and their World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), cat. nos. 121–2, 128–31; Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine II*, 57–9, cat. nos. 38, 65–7, 69.

[23] Εἰρήνην ἀφίημι ὑμῖν, εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν' Jn 14:27.

[24] This passage also appears on the outer edge of the octagonal gold marriage ring in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. The sparse evidence on the marriage liturgy in Byzantium during this period does not suggest that this passage was ever incorporated into any known Christian marriage rite. Instead, if biblical readings were included, they were the story of Jesus' miracle at the wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1–11) and Eph 5:28–33 (or Eph 5:20–33). See G. Radle, 'The Byzantine Marriage Tradition in Calabria: *Vatican Reginensis GR. 75* (a. 982/3)', *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 9 (2012): 226; S. Parenti and E. Velkovska (eds.), *L'Euchologio Barberini Gr. 336* (Rome: C.L.V.-Edizioni Liturgiche, 2000).

while the Virgin sits frontally on a lyre-backed throne, with a basket of thread at her feet. The star between them suggests the celestial nature of the event. Below at the left, the pregnant Virgin and Elizabeth embrace near a gabled-roof house in the Visitation scene. In the crowded Nativity scene at the right, Salome attends the Virgin while animals overlook Christ in the manger, shepherds approach from below and Joseph ponders the birth. Inscribed on the medallion's upper border is Gabriel's greeting to Mary, 'Hail, favoured one! The Lord is with you!' (Lk 1:28).[25]

The Annunciation, Visitation and Nativity scenes recount the first events of the incarnation, illustrating Mary's identity as the Bearer of God; however, its pairing with the marriage scene on the opposite side suggests the story's relevance for the new marriage. Christ's blessing of peace for the marriage ('Peace I leave with you', inscribed above the marriage scene), shows how freely such blessings could be reappropriated to new contexts. In both inscriptions, the medallion applies biblical blessings somewhat ambiguously: just as Christ's words are here intended for the bridal couple, Gabriel's greeting to Mary may be intended as a blessing for the newly married couple (specifically as a blessing for the new bride's fertility) or, alternatively, as a prayer for the wearer to use in devotion to the Virgin, as discussed with regard to the Adana medallions.

The Schmidt medallion sets forth Mary's birth-giving as a biblical prototype for the new bride, a theological approach that is attested elsewhere in sixth-century Byzantium. For example, a similar analogy between courtly figure and biblical model is seen on the gold medallion in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, which portrays Christ's baptism. The medallion may have been struck in 583/4, when the emperor Maurice's son and future emperor, Theodosios, was baptised on the feast of Christ's Baptism (6 January).[26] Perhaps the best-known example of this type of visual comparison appears on the hem of Theodora's garments in the apse mosaic of San Vitale, which depicts the three Magi offering gifts to Christ in a pose similar to that of

[25] ΧΑΙΡΕ ΚΕΧΑΙΡΙΤΟΜΕΝΗ Ο ΚΣ ΜΕΤΑ ΣΟΥ· Vassilaki, *Mother of God*, 290–1, cat. no. 10.

[26] Ioli Kalavrezou observes a similar attempt to link courtly figures to biblical figures in the Macedonian dynasty's selection of 6 January for the baptism of future emperors or the crowning of imperial figures. I. Kalavrezou, 'Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998), 75; P. Grierson, 'The Date of the Dumbarton Oaks Epiphany Medallion', *DOP* 15 (1961): 221–4. Grierson notes that, according to Gregory of Nazianzus, the feast of Epiphany was one of the three primary dates of the church year that baptisms were performed; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40, *In Sanctum Baptismum*, 24 (PG 36, 392).

Theodora, thus likening the empress' donation to that of the Magi.[27] On the Schmidt medallion, the Marian scenes are used to suggest that, like the Virgin, the new bride will be favoured with children by God. However, the potential to read these Marian images and inscriptions in more than one way – as devotional aids or as blessings for the bride's fertility – exemplifies the flexibility with which Marian narrative could be applied on private objects, particularly before the period of Iconoclasm.

Marian Narrative on Tapestry-Woven Textiles: The Annunciation and the Visitation

Among the objects that survive from the early Byzantine period, textiles rank among the most personal. Except for a few extant examples that may have functioned in ecclesiastical or liturgical contexts, garments were usually made for private or domestic contexts, far from the watchful eyes of Church officials, and so they had greater potential to reflect a wearer's personal preferences. The surviving examples of New Testament narrative scenes on textiles are quite few in number, probably less than 2 per cent of the extant corpus, and most weavings come from Egypt, where they were taken from burials.[28] Among surviving narrative scenes, we find the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity and Adoration of the Magi, as well as, occasionally, Christ's Baptism and miracles.[29] Textile production in antiquity is generally attributed to women, who produced fabrics for their families or, in some contexts, for purchase by others.[30] Therefore, the relatively frequent depiction of Marian

27 G. Vikan, 'Pilgrims in Magi's Clothing: The Impact of Mimesis on Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art', in R. Ousterhout (ed.), *The Blessings of Pilgrimage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 103–5, fig. 22.

28 Davis, 'Fashioning a Divine Body', 337–45.

29 Several of the scenes depicted in tapestry weave are tentatively identified, often through comparisons with the same scenes portrayed in resist-dyed fabrics, silk weavings or in other contemporaneous artistic media. The same difficulties regarding identification of scenes and figures hold true for tapestry-woven fabrics bearing pagan subjects, even with the presence of identifying inscriptions, which are frequently absent or inaccurate. See C. Nauerth, 'David oder Achill?', in C. Fluck and G. Helmecke (eds.), *Textile Messages: Inscribed Fabrics from Roman to Abbasid Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 95–105; T. Dale, 'Power of the Anointed: The Life of David on Two Coptic Textiles in the Walters Art Gallery', *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 51 (1993): 23–4. A brief survey of fragments bearing New Testament subjects was included in the appendix of L. Abdel-Malek, 'Joseph Tapestries and Related Coptic Textiles' (PhD thesis, Boston University, 1980).

30 In some cases, there is evidence that the dyeing process was carried out by men on the outskirts of settlements, but evidence suggests that most of the thread-production and weaving was done by women. E. J. W. Barber, 'Weaving the Social Fabric', in C. Gillis and M.-L. Nosch

scenes among the surviving tapestry-woven roundels and bands may reflect Mary's importance among women. Surviving depictions of the Annunciation and Visitation on tapestry-woven pieces are provocative in the context of the present study, because during biblical times and early Byzantium alike, pregnancy was likened to weaving, so that even the Virgin was poetically described as a loom on which Christ's body was woven.[31]

The Annunciation usually portrays Mary being greeted by Gabriel when she is weaving the Temple veil or, less frequently, drawing water at a well. The Visitation weavings depict the pregnant Virgin's embrace with Elizabeth, who was miraculously pregnant with John the Baptist in her old age. While both scenes were sometimes included in narrative sequences on textiles, they were also shown alone or paired together on roundels. The colourful patches bearing only the Annunciation or Visitation scenes could have been sewn alongside other roundels and bands on a tunic in order to retell the incarnation narrative. This is the case on a tunic in the Field Museum in Chicago, one of the few surviving complete tunics that bear clavi and several roundels depicting events from Christ's life.[32] On such garments, narrative scenes may have been placed in a sequence that reflected the textual version of the narrative; however, it may have been difficult (or deemed unnecessary) to trace the storylines around the wearer's body. Clavi and roundels also appeared in other combinations on garments, and sometimes repeated scenes for maximum effect. For example, it is possible that multiple Annunciation or Visitation roundels appeared on the same garment, entirely excerpted from the narrative context, as occurs on a child-sized tunic in the British Museum which portrays several images of the Magi.[33] On the basis of their imagery and design details, the clavi and roundels discussed here have been dated between the seventh and the early ninth centuries.[34]

Most interesting for the present study are two tapestry woven bands in Boston and Brussels, each of which bears multiple depictions of the meeting

(eds.), *Ancient Textiles: Production, Craft and Society* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 207), 173–8; E. J. W. Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years. Women, Cloth and Society in Early Times* (New York: Norton, 1994).

[31] See Ps 139:13–15; N. Constas, 'Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the Loom of the Flesh', *JECS* 3 (1995): 169–94.

[32] Maguire, 'Garments Pleasing to God', 220, figs. 25, 26; Davis, 'Fashioning a Divine Body', 345, fig. 6. More commonly, tapestry-woven clavi and roundels were cut away from tunics and larger fabrics when they were 'harvested' from Egyptian burial grounds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

[33] Maguire, 'Garments Pleasing to God', 229, fig. 29.

[34] Abdel-Malek, 'Joseph Tapestries', 160–4, 196–7.

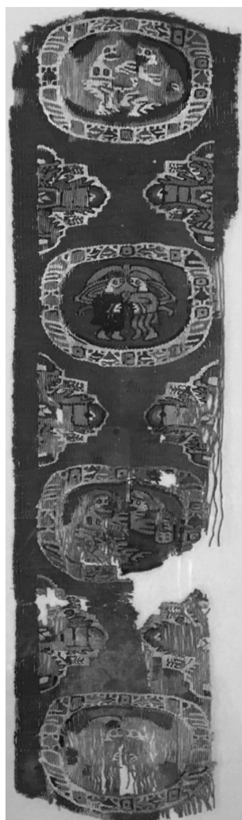

Figure 2.4 Boston, Museum Fine Arts. Tapestry-woven fragment with alternating depictions of the Annunciation and Visitation scenes (photo: © 2018 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

between Mary and Elizabeth. A heretofore unpublished clavus conserved in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston depicts the Visitation scene twice, alternating with heavily abraded depictions of what is probably the Annunciation (Figure 2.4).[35] The Visitation scene shows Elizabeth standing on the right, wearing a bright gold garment, while Mary stands on the left in a dark

[35] Each roundel on the band measures approximately three and a half inches (8.9 cm) in diameter and is encircled by a border of stylised leaves and flowers, punctuated by circles. The Visitation portrays Mary and Elizabeth embracing with a gold, oval-shaped design around their upper bodies. A more detailed rendering of the Visitation can be seen on a roundel in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which depicts an elaborate, oval-shaped structure behind the women in blue, gold, green and ivory, with curved finials. M.-H. Rutschowscaya, 'The Mother of God in Coptic Textiles', in Vassilaki, *Mother of God*, 220, pl. 167; A. F. Kendrick, *Catalogue of Textiles from Burying-Grounds in Egypt* (London, 1922), vol. 3, 57, pl. XVIII; Abdel-Malek ('Joseph Tapestries', 224, no. 179) proposed that the four roundels on the Boston band portray the Visitation four times. Closer inspection reveals that this is inaccurate.

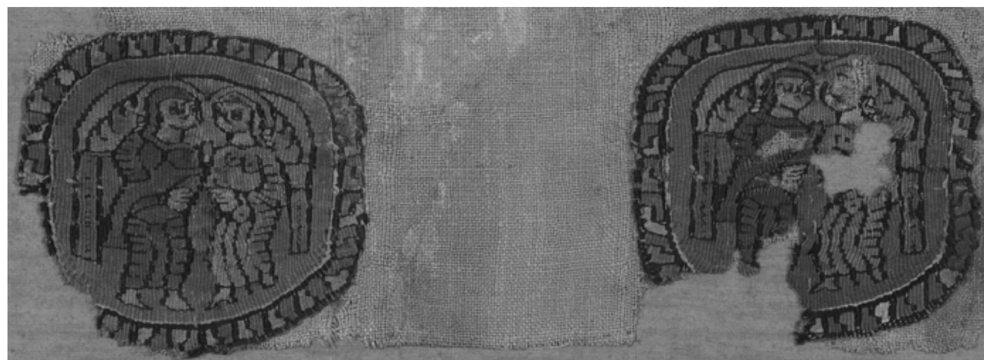

Figure 2.5 Brussels, Royal Museum of Art and History. Textile fragment with two Visitation scenes (photo: © RMAH, Brussels).

blue garment; both women are veiled and have large eyes. Alternating with the two Visitation roundels are damaged depictions of what seems to be Gabriel greeting Mary. If the scene depicts the Annunciation at the Well, then Mary holds a bucket, but the more commonly depicted version of the Annunciation at the time portrayed her with a basket with four balls of thread, weaving the Temple veil. Unfortunately, Mary's body and gestures are not discernible; thus, it is not possible to determine whether she holds a water bucket or a basket. Nevertheless, the scene almost certainly depicts the Annunciation, which was typically paired with the Visitation.[36]

On a second tapestry-woven band, in the Brussels Museum of Fine Arts, two Visitation roundels are positioned side-by-side without any other scenes or ornamentation; this is a fragment of a band that probably originally portrayed additional depictions of the Visitation (Figure 2.5).[37] The orientation of the scenes suggests that the band would have probably been viewed horizontally as a strip attached either to a sleeve or to the hem of a garment – as opposed to a clavus worn over the wearer's shoulders, on which figures and scenes are more often arranged vertically. Despite the technical challenge of rendering details of the human form in the medium of tapestry weave, the breasts of both Mary and Elizabeth are outlined,

[36] Between the roundels, and running along the left and right borders of the fabric, are motifs that resemble crosses divided in half and composed of ornamental vegetal forms with details in red, orange, gold, green, black and ivory. The decorative crosses are bisected on both sides of the textile so that if the edges are folded under, the pattern gives the impression that the design continues beyond the edges of the weaving. This design, combined with its red-dyed background and the repeated Visitation scenes, imitates the visual effects of more costly draw-loom textiles.

[37] I. Errera, *Collection d'anciennes étoffes égyptiennes* (Brussels: J. E. Crossens, 1916), no. 308.

and those of Elizabeth are marked with dots in their centres, both details suggesting the common symptom of swelling during pregnancy. The repetition of this single scene on the Brussels band, along with the attention to the physical signs of pregnancy, suggest the significance of the Visitation scene for a female wearer who may have been experiencing similar symptoms. Although these features do not exclude its potential educational function, it is doubtful that the women's breasts would have been outlined and emphasised in a male monastic setting; such attention to female anatomy is uncommon in Byzantine art and suggests the band's domestic use by women.

Why were these scenes excerpted from their narrative context and depicted multiple times on two woven bands? If the images were intended to function as icons for prayer, then only one portrayal of the scene would be necessary; furthermore, the devotional purpose of the scene, when depicted on clothing that faces away from the wearer, remains open to question. The scene of the Visitation certainly helped to emphasise both the human and divine natures of Christ and the Virgin's unique role in the incarnation. That said, weavings depicting two miraculously pregnant women who gave birth to sons may have been particularly meaningful for women desiring to conceive and give birth to male children, and they probably held personal meaning for any women who hoped for a safe childbirth. The Visitation's repetition also may indicate its amulet-like function for a woman experiencing the physical discomforts associated with pregnancy. A non-Marian point of comparison for the invocation of New Testament figures for personal protection can be found in the relatively large number of depictions of the Magi on pilgrims' tokens, jewellery and tapestry-woven textiles. The popularity of this subject is attributed to pilgrims' and travellers' self-perception as imitators of the archetypal biblical travellers, through whose image they activated a kind of 'sympathetic magic', likening themselves to their biblical prototypes and invoking divine protection through their imitative actions at *loca sancta*.[38] On the Boston band in particular, the repeated representations of the Annunciation and Visitation may thus invoke the miraculous pregnancies of Mary and Elizabeth, functioning as charms to aid their wearers in conceiving, carrying or birthing a child. In terms of their presumed magical power, the repeating scenes on the weavings in Boston and Brussels can be compared to the recurring devices in magical papyri in the form of ring signs, crosses, cryptic letters and words. In most instances, multiple portrayals of a symbol or image were believed to

[38] Vikan, 'Pilgrims in Magi's Clothing', 104–5.

increase the effectiveness of such objects as auspicious devices.[39] Given how uncommon New Testament imagery is on Egyptian textiles of this period, it is likely that the wearers of these charms either commissioned them or wove the bands themselves. If they were not sewn into tunics, one can also imagine both of these bands being used by women to assist in pregnancy and childbirth. In each instance, the bands would have visually invoked the divinely blessed pregnancies of Mary and Elizabeth as pictorial charms that invited divine favour on their wearers. There is additional evidence that Mary's pregnancy was invoked to aid women in labour and delivery not only by means of images, but also with the help of spoken or written prayers, as indicated in a surviving Coptic prayer that reveals the names of Mary's labour pains, thus conjuring spirits during labour and childbirth.[40] Overall, the textiles bearing multiple depictions of the Visitation scene indicate the deeply personal value attributed to Marian narrative scenes on private objects, which contrasts with – but does not necessarily conflict with – Shenoute's use of such imagery for theological education of monks.[41]

Conclusions

The small-scale, personal objects discussed here demonstrate the flexibility of Marian narrative imagery in the period before Iconoclasm to serve not only educational purposes, as Shenoute discusses, but also to facilitate devotion and mediate personal concerns, especially those of women concerning childbirth. Depending on their context, scenes of Mary's motherhood could convey both theological and personal messages, suggesting some ambiguity in the meaning and function of the scenes.

[39] H. Maguire, 'Magic and the Christian Image', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995), 59, 68. See also Maguire, 'Garments Pleasing to God', 220; O. Wulff and W. F. Volbach, *Spätantike und koptische Stoffe aus ägyptischen Grabfunden: In den Staatlichen Museen, Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Ägyptisches Museum, Schliemann-Sammlung* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1926), 87, pl. 96, no. 4678.

[40] M. Meyer, 'A Coptic Book of Ritual Power from Heidelberg', in M. Meyer and R. Smith (eds.), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994), 335. In Western Europe, women sometimes employed 'birth girdles' which were passed down within families. The Western girdles were strips of parchment sewn together and inscribed with scriptural passages, prayers or charms. These provide a parallel for the use of girdles with biblical subject matter in order to promote healthy pregnancy. L. T. Olsan, 'Magic and Charms', in Margaret Schaus (ed.), *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 504–5.

[41] Some readers may recall the use of Marian relics to assist Byzantine empresses with pregnancy. There is no evidence for the use of Marian relics in pregnancy during the pre-iconoclastic period.

For example, on the Schmidt medallion the miraculous pregnancy and motherhood of Mary held blessings for the bride's fertility, which is suggested through the juxtaposition of the marriage scene with the initial scenes of the incarnation. Gabriel's laudatory greeting to Mary – 'Blessed are you among women!' – announces the incarnation, but his words here may simultaneously signify a blessing for the bride's child-bearing abilities and facilitate prayer to the Virgin Mary. We imagine a similar function for the tapestry-woven depictions of the Annunciation and the Visitation, which repeat the scenes of Mary's motherhood and pregnancy as a kind of pictorial blessing. Their wearers might reasonably have viewed Mary and Elizabeth as model women whose pregnancies were favoured by God; they therefore preferred a multiplication of the scenes on their garments. The textiles bearing repeated depictions of the Annunciation and the Visitation demonstrate the malleability of scenes of Christ's Incarnation and Mary's motherhood, particularly when excerpted from the broader incarnation narrative. Quite possibly crafted by women in domestic contexts, such scenes were capable of becoming personal amulets that reflected women's concerns regarding fertility and pregnancy, as suggested by the physical symptoms of pregnancy that appear in the portrayals of Mary and Elizabeth.

By contrast, Abbot Shenoute's comments on the Marian embroideries indicate that in his monastery, the same or similar scenes of the incarnation may have been useful for teaching theology. In non-monastic, domestic contexts, however, as I have argued in relation to the Adana medallions, scenes of Mary's motherhood were suitable for promoting devotion to the Mother of God, particularly among women and sometimes in ways that reflected the unique concerns of women and mothers. The Adana medallions display a complex integration of Marian scenes with their inscriptions. The kneeling supplicant serves as a model devotee in the top register who, on beholding the Annunciation and Visitation, perhaps responds with the prayer whose first words are wedged between the scenes: 'Hail, favoured one, the Lord is with you!' (Lk 1:28).

In summary, the examples in this chapter demonstrate the importance of inscriptions and material contexts as guides to us about beholders' responses to, and usage of, Marian narrative imagery. As witnessed on the textiles and medallions discussed, narrative scenes such as the Annunciation and Visitation can function in more than one manner, so that a scene's context and inscription inflect its meaning and function. In some cases, narrative scenes even simultaneously promote Marian veneration and serve as a typological model for a newly married bride, as on the Schmidt medallion. The Schmidt and Adana medallions also contribute new evidence for the

understanding of narrative images in Marian devotion before Iconoclasm. Neither of these aspects of the medallions have been previously published or discussed in terms of these objects' function for their wearers. Whereas previous studies have demonstrated the didactic and apotropaic functions of Marian narrative depictions, the objects discussed here provide clear evidence of their devotional function, specifically in private contexts. They also illustrate that narrative scenes, not only frontal, hieratic depictions of Mary, were part of the pre-Iconoclastic vocabulary of devotional imagery that facilitated Marian veneration.

3 The Theological Substance of St Anna's Motherhood in Byzantine Homilies and Art

EIRINI PANOU

Introduction

The reception of the narrative of the Virgin Mary's childhood in the Middle Byzantine period, as recorded in the *Protevangelium of James*, has only recently begun to attract scholarly attention.[1] In Eastern Christianity, Mary's childhood was associated with the incarnation of Christ, as is made obvious in homilies concerning the Conception of Mary (by Anna), the Nativity of Mary and the Entry of Mary into the Temple. Preachers considered her early life to be the essential threshold that led to the divine Word and Son of God becoming fully human, and in this framework they incorporated details of the Virgin's childhood into these festal texts.

The present chapter is inspired by Doula Mourike's view that the depictions of Mary at a young age with her parents have a 'hue of human tenderness but [that] works with Mary at a mature age have deeper theological content'.[2] Whereas Mourike finds less theological meaning in images of the Virgin's childhood, it will be argued that this phase is as important in Christological terms as are the scenes of Mary's later life and death.[3] With this in mind, we will consider homilies on the early life of Mary, which preachers used as a point of departure, to show that the apocryphal life of Mary and of her parents bore within itself important tenets of Chalcedonian theology and repudiated ideas that were hostile to iconophile dogma.[4] Using material from the *Protevangelium*, Byzantine preachers revealed in

1 St Anna's cult in Byzantium receives detailed treatment in E. Panou, *The Cult of St Anna in Byzantium* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

2 D. Mourike, 'Η Παναγία και οι Θεοπάτορες: Αφηγηματική σκηνή ή εικονιστική παράσταση', *DChAE* 5 (1969): 50. Mourike comes to this conclusion after dividing the Virgin's portraiture into infancy, young life and adulthood, then arguing that theological profundity progresses in parallel with age.

3 Detailed treatment of St Anna's iconic imagery can be found in Panou, *The Cult*, ch. 3.

4 For the Greek text of the *Protevangelium of James*, see C. Tischendorf (ed.), *Evangelia apocrypha: Adhibitis plurimis codicibus graecis et latinis maximam partem nunc primum consultis atque ineditorum copia insignibus* (Leipzig: Avenarius et Mendelssohn, 1853), 1–49; E. de Strycker (ed.), *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques/Recherches sur le papyrus Bodmer 5 avec une édition critique du texte grec et une traduction annotée* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961), 32–153.

their homilies how this narrative supports orthodox Christological doctrine, along with the dogmas that are associated with it.

From the eighth and particularly the ninth centuries onward, familial bonds established the line of people who brought about Christ's incarnation and established parenthood as one of the means by which God accomplished his divine work. For this reason, homilists associated Mary's early life with Christ's own incarnation and produced texts in which Anna and Joachim's lives were celebrated in relation to this central orthodox dogma. The insistence on Christ's human nature was particularly attractive for the pro-image faction during and after the Iconoclastic controversy; they argued that Christ became incarnate on earth and thus could and *should* be depicted: 'Christ can be depicted since he was born of Mary who is a human, and denying Christ's humanity is denying his mother's humanity', writes Theodore the Stoudite, highlighting the importance of the physical ancestry of Christ.[5] Since Mary's own humanity was essential to the dogma of the incarnation, preachers went even further: they asserted Christ's genealogy by vehemently defending the humanity of Sts Anna and Joachim. To achieve this, homilists emphasised two aspects of the narrative in the *Protevangelium*, namely, the way in which Anna conceived Mary and the process of her pregnancy. A third element, which is not mentioned in the apocryphal narrative but was a homiletic 'invention' that reflected an interest in human emotion during the Iconoclastic period,[6] was Mary's apparent lack of affection for her parents before she left them and entered the Temple. The celebration of these three events went hand in hand with dogmatic clarifications, owing to the fact that, from the ninth century onwards, the *Protevangelium* became the main source of inspiration for the celebration of the corresponding feasts in Constantinople.[7] In short, preachers had to dispel any doubt concerning the legitimacy of the *Protevangelium* in order to ensure its entry into the liturgical life and cultural outlook of the Byzantines.

How did Anna Conceive Mary?

In Eastern Christian theology, Christ's incarnation represents the most important stage in the divine *oikonomia*, making Mary's birth the event

[5] Dalkos (ed.), *Λόγοι αντιρρητικοί κατά Εικονομάχων* (Athens: Indiktos, 2006), 206–7.

[6] N. Tsironis, 'Emotion and the Senses in Marian Homilies of the Middle Byzantine Period', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 179–99.

[7] Panou, *The Cult*, 41–8.

that fulfils the divine plan. As the ninth-century patriarch Photios states succinctly, ‘The incarnation is the road to birth, the birth is the result of pregnancy; this is why a woman [that is, Mary] was selected to bring to the divine plan to completion’.[8] In addition to Mary’s early life, homilists became interested in what had taken place even before her conception. In this framework, Photios’ reference to Anna’s conception of Mary reflects earlier homilists’ interest in this subject as well as renewed interest in the *Protevangelium* in this period.[9] For all of these writers, the doctrine of the incarnation lay at the heart of this theme since Mary’s miraculous, but also physical, birth proved Christ’s divinity and humanity. One of the themes that featured in homilies was the way in which Anna conceived the Virgin. Their views can be categorised according to the type of conception that they supported: natural conception, conception through prayer or a combination of both. At first, this division might seem surprising since the view that Mary was conceived without natural conception seems to disprove belief in the true incarnation of Christ, which was associated with the iconophile theology. But preachers were not analytical in their views on this matter, possibly because they did not consider any of these three views to be heretical. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that divine births, as John Chrysostom writes, start ‘neither from female nature, nor from intercourse’ and ‘if divine grace and the providence of God is missing, then conception is not sufficient’.[10] Nevertheless, it will be demonstrated later that homilists *did* have their concerns about Anna’s pregnancy, but that these were not related to the method of begetting Mary. For now, it is sufficient to show that different approaches towards the method of conception can be discerned and are presented in the following ways.

The first view involves natural conception. Theodore the Stoudite vehemently defended this position. In one of his letters written between 809 and 811/12,[11] addressed to the hermit Theoktistos, Theodore responded to

[8] PG 102, 560B; C. Mango (trans.), *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, English Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 174.

[9] M. B. Cunningham (trans.), *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008); M. B. Cunningham, ‘The Use of the *Protoevangelion of James* in Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God’, in Brubaker and Cunningham, *The Cult of the Mother of God In Byzantium*, 163–78.

[10] PG 54, 639: Μὴ τοίνυν θεὸς ἀπὸ γάμου καὶ φθορᾶς συλλαμβάνεται, καὶ ἐξ ἀνδρὸς καὶ κοίτης τεχθῆναι ἢ σαρκωθῆναι δύναται; Οὐδαμῶς, ἀλλ᾽ ἐξἐνεργείας θεοῦ, ἐξ ἐπιφοιτήσεως ὑψίστου, ἐκ παρουσίας Πνεύματος.

[11] T. Miller (trans.), ‘Theodore Studites: Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople’, in J. Thomas and A. Constantinides Hero (eds.),

the hermit's wish that he clarify some issues. Theoktistos believed that the Virgin Mary had always existed and that she was not conceived through, from or during physical intercourse.[12] Theodore considered this position heretical and, in his response to the hermit Theoktistos, he stated that it was not in accordance with orthodox teaching and that from now on the hermit should accept that Mary was conceived according to the laws of nature.

The second view concerning the method of Anna's conception involved a combination of human intercourse and prayer. Andrew of Crete wrote that Mary 'was born … as a result of a man's union and seed',[13] 'enriching his homily with vivid images from the reproductive process',[14] but without denying the role of prayer in enabling this process.[15]

The third view was supported by the *Protevangelium* and firmly upheld the belief that Anna conceived Mary as a result of prayer alone.[16] The texts in this group by far outnumber those in the other two. Epiphanios the Younger,[17] Sophronios of Jerusalem (550/60–638/9),[18] Kosmas Vestitor (eighth century),[19] George of Nikomedia (ninth century),[20] Niketas David Paphlagon (ninth century),[21] Patriarch Euthymios (907–12),[22] Leo VI (tenth century),[23] Peter of Argos (tenth century),[24] Theophylaktos of Ochrid (eleventh century),[25] James Kokkinobaphos (twelfth century),[26] Nikephoros Kallistos (1256–1335),[27] Gregory Palamas (fourteenth century),[28] Isidore

Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments, DOS 35, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 2000), vol. 1, 68.

12 G. Fatouros (ed.), *Theodori Studitae epistulae,* CFHB Series Berolinensis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), no. 490, ll. 16–20.

13 M. B. Cunningham, '"All-Holy Infant": Byzantine and Western Views on the Conception of the Virgin Mary', *SVTQ* 50 (2006): 141; PG 97, 1313A–B.

14 PG 97, 816C; PG 97, 860C–D; Cunningham (trans.), *Wider than Heaven*, 80, 121.

15 PG 97, 816C, 876C.

16 De Strycker, *La forme*, 68, 74, 78; Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 6–8.

17 PG 43, 488.

18 PG 87, 3265D–3267A–B (Homily on the Annunciation of Mary).

19 PG 106, 1005B.

20 PG 100, 1369: 'ἐπίμονοι δεήσεις'; PG 100, 1372C: 'ἐπιτεταμένης δεήσεως'.

21 PG 106, 20B.

22 PO 19, 443, 451.

23 T. Antonopoulou (ed.), *Leonis VI Sapientis Imperatoris Byzantini Homiliae* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 224.

24 K. T. Kyriakopoulos (ed.), *Αγίου Πέτρου επισκόπου Άργους Βίος και λόγοι* (Athens: Iera Mitropoli Argolidos, 1976), 28, 145–7; 32, 225.

25 PG 126, 133B–C.

26 PG 127, 560–B, 569C–D, 572A.

27 PG 145, 652B.

28 P. K. Christou, (ed.), *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ. Ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα, v. 11, Ομιλίες (ΜΓ΄–ΞΓ΄)* (Thessalonike: Paterikai Ekdoseis Gregorios o Palamas, 2009), 269: 'Θεοῦ πρὸς Ἰωακεὶμ καὶ

of Thessalonike (fourteenth century),[29] Nicholas Kabasilas (fourteenth century)[30] and George Scholarios (fifteenth century) all supported it.[31] Emperor Leo VI, in his homily on Mary's Nativity, inspired by his own efforts to secure a male heir to the throne,[32] referred to the couple's fasting, prayer and loud cries,[33] which resulted in the conception of Mary, showing that the emperor was more inclined to Mary's conception through prayer than physical activity. Finally, unlike Theodore the Stoudite, who clearly supported physical conception, Niketas Paphlagon was the only homilist to vehemently defend St Anna's conception through prayer by explicitly denying the physical conception, which none of the other homilists ever did: 'Anna conceived by praying rather than in the natural way'.[34]

The number of preachers who dealt with Anna's early stages of pregnancy shows that Mary's manner of conception was important but not definitive for orthodox theology, since it served the dogmatic needs that emerged during Iconoclasm. The method of conception was not an issue that needed resolution on the part of the homilists because they did not consider it heretical; there are only two theologians (Theodore the Stoudite and Niketas Paphlagon) who express strong views on the subject. In all of the other cases, this was not a matter of theological debate but rather an acceptance of the apocryphal narrative which records conception through prayer. Thus one cannot argue that homilists propounded a non-orthodox view. The method of conception was not believed to represent a deviation from what had been hammered out in the course of the Iconoclast controversy, namely, that Mary's natural conception and human parents reinforced belief in Christ's humanity in the incarnation. Overall, notwithstanding their differences in approach, all views point to the same conclusion: from the eighth century on, the prevalence of conception through prayer, as inferred from the *Protevangelium*, indicates its gradual acceptance by ninth- and tenth-century homilists and later, owing to the work of their predecessors who each presented the apocryphal work as a narrative that was in accordance with Christian teaching.

τὴν Ἄνναν τελεσφόρος ἐπαγγελία τεκεῖν ἐν γήρᾳ παῖδα τοὺς ἀγόνους ἐκ νέου, εὐχὴ πρὸς Θεὸν τῆς θαυμασίας ταυτησὶ συζυγίας ἀντιδώσειν τῷ δόντι τὴν δεδομένην, καθ᾽ἣνώς ἀληθῶς ἀξιόχρεων καὶ δικαιοτάτην εὐχὴν᾽.

[29] PG 139, 24A, 28B, 52.

[30] PO 19, 466, 468–9.

[31] PO 19, 518.22–3.

[32] Panou, *The Cult*, 19–20.

[33] Antonopoulou, *Leonis VI Sapientis*, 224.

[34] PG 106, 20B.

Mary's Birth in Seven/Nine Months

In the formative period between the eighth and ninth centuries, the acknowledgement of the *Protevangelium* came with the diffusion of its content and with challenges against it that needed answers. In his homily on the Entry of Mary, the late eighth-century patriarch of Constantinople, Tarasios, writes that Mary remained in Anna's womb for nine months, as dictated by human nature. Then he pauses in his narrative to comment on a belief that was currently circulating, which presented Mary as having been born after seven months. According to Tarasios:

> none of the Church's members should accept the word(s) that have been put forward, namely, that the Virgin was born in seven months. And I have heard many fools who struggle over these [words], who I think are worse than non-believers. These are the inventions of heretics. These are against the Church, foreign to orthodox people, because the Virgin and child of God completed nine months in the belly of Anna, as human nature dictates. But the mouths of the foolish are not able to blame the blameless; they attribute this word to the Scripture; [they] have dislocated [the word] from the truth and the correct [teaching]. … I am not convinced until those who are right in their judgement carefully study Scripture and explain it with divine thoughts; and until I hear [or read] that the sayings [of Scripture] have been understood [by them]. And [I am not convinced until] they – as children of the Church [are supposed to do] – have completely cut off the errors they find in it [i.e. Scripture], which the enemies have sown.[35]

Later in the same homily, he refers to 'children of heretics' who offend the Virgin with blasphemies,[36] and to the Jews, 'who have not accepted the Virgin and who say unfair things about her because of envy'.[37] Tarasios was the only homilist to highlight the idea of the seven-month gestation so vividly, but he was not the only preacher to mention it. For (ps-) John of Damascus,[38] Andrew of Crete,[39] the Constantinopolitan *Synaxarion*[40] and the *Synaxarion* of Basil II, the seven-month gestation was rejected and the nine-month one

[35] PG 98, 1485.

[36] PG 98, 1496C: Αἰσχυνέσθωσαν αἱρετικῶν παῖδες, οἱ τὴν Παρθένον βλασφήμῳ στόματι καὶ ἰοβόλῳ συκοφαντεῖν ἐπιχειροῦντες.

[37] PG 98, 1497A–B: Ὦ Ἰουδαίων Συναγωγὴ, οἱ τὴν ἐκ φυλῆς τῆς ὑμετέρας ἐκλάμψασαν Παρθένον μὴ δεξάμενοι Θεοτόκον, ἀλλὰ καὶ λοιδοροῦντες ἀναξίως καὶ ἀσελγέσι χείλεσι, καὶ τῷ φθόνῳ κινούμενοι, καταλαλοῦντες αὐτῆς ἀδικίαν καὶ ἀνομίαν.

[38] B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 7 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), vol. 5, 180; trans. Cunningham, 'All-Holy Infant', 142.

[39] PG 97, 1313A.

[40] H. Delehaye (ed.), *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Propylaeum ad Acta sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1902), 291.

was advocated: 'Mary was not born, as some claim, in the seventh month or without a man, but was born [when Anna had] completed nine months [of pregnancy] … through the union with a man'.[41] This illustrates that Anna's nine-month pregnancy was preferred in orthodox theology since it supported the human nature of Christ's physical forebears.

On a different level, Tarasios' comment raises questions about which version of the *Protevangelium* he used to compose his homily. In Testuz's and de Strycker's editions of the *Protevangelium* (using a papyrus which they date to the third or fourth century, respectively),[42] the passage reads: 'In the seventh month of labour Anna gave birth'; however, in Tischendorf's edition of a tenth-century manuscript, the seven-month period of labour is changed to nine.[43] Since the Bodmer V published by de Strycker and Testuz is the earliest known version of the *Protevangelium* and the seven-month gestation is mentioned there, it has been assumed that this detail must be closer to the original version.[44] Testuz attempted to answer the question

41 PG 117, 196B–C.

42 For Testuz' dates, see his *Papyrus Bodmer V, Nativité de Marie* (Cologny: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1958), 26. He places the main text in the third century and a number of additions to the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century. De Strycker, who worked on the same manuscript, dates it to the second half of the fourth century; see de Strycker, 'Le Protévangile', 343. In any case, Papyrus Bodmer V, to which Testuz and de Strycker refer, 'takes us very near the oldest text'; see van P. Stempvoort, 'The *Protevangelium Jacobi*: The Sources of its Theme and Style and their Bearing on its Date', in F. L. Cross (ed.), *Studia Evangelica 3, Papers Presented to the Second International Congress on New Testament Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1961* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 425. Although Tischendorf's edition is commonly used, there are differences between the two editions in terms of grammar, vocabulary and style. See de Strycker, 'Le Protévangile', 347–8. I use de Strycker's and Testuz' editions here since they appear to be closer to the original text.

43 De Strycker, *La forme*, 88; Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer V*, 50; Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 11. The seven-month birth also appears in the sixth-century Armenian version of the *Protevangelium*. The text states, 'When Anna was in her 210th day of expectancy, which is seven months … she gave birth to her holy child'. See A. Terian (ed.), *The Armenian Gospel of the Infancy, with Three Early Versions of the Protevangelium of James* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11.

44 P. W. van der Horst, '"Seven Months" Children in Jewish and Christian Literature from Antiquity', *ETL* 54 (1978): 348–9 and n. 12. Tarasios' comment on the seven-month gestation of Anna reminds us of the homily, *On the Passion and the Resurrection,* a narrative on the early life of Mary, which is attributed either to Euodios, bishop of Antioch, or to the Patriarch of Alexandria, Damian (sixth–seventh century), or even to St Constantine of Assiut (sixth century); see L. Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 208, no. 108, n. 1. In the case of Euodios, it seems more plausible to designate not the Syrian bishop, but the fifth-century bishop of Uzalis (Africa) who, in his correspondence with Augustine of Hippo, discusses Christ's conception by Mary. See Boniface Ramsey (ed.), and Roland Teske (trans.), *Letters 156–210: Epistulae II by Saint Augustine of Hippo* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 53–5 (Letter 161), where it is written: 'In the ninth month, like all human beings, [Mary] gave birth to [Christ] and nourished him with the virginal milk'; cf. CSCO 525, 88.12–13.

of Anna's seven-month gestation in the *Protevangelium* by claiming that her annunciation occurred during her second month of labour,[45] showing that this crucial detail conformed with the accepted nine-month gestation of St Anna. In relation to this, Cunningham has argued that 'there could be Christians who believed in the abnormal birth of the Theotokos',[46] and Gambero suggests that 'the premature birth of Mary underlines the exceptional character of her future life'.[47] Byzantine homilists not only defended the Virgin's nine-month birth but also refuted her premature one. It seems that this was because the seventh-month pregnancy was rooted in Jewish theology, rendering Anna's seven-month gestation unacceptable to Christians in the light of anti-Jewish polemic found particularly in homilies dedicated to Mary's Entry to the Temple.[48]

According to P. W. van der Horst, birth after seven months was connected in Jewish literature with 'divine beings or [those] whose conception had been miraculous'; thus there is 'a close link between the short pregnancy and the manner of begetting or conceiving and, on the whole, when a child is born after six or seven months and is viable, its conception must have happened under very favourable circumstances'.[49] Van der Horst's view is upheld in the Gospel of the Hebrews, an apocryphal second-century work written in Greek, which provides a narrative of the life of Christ and survives only in fragmentary form.[50] In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius of Caesarea (fourth century) places this text among the disputed works known to Early Christian writers.[51] (Ps-) Cyril of Jerusalem (fourth century), in his *Discourse on the Theotokos*, refers to this text and particularly to its claim that 'Christ was in Mary's womb for seven months'.[52] In contrast to van der Horst's perspective,

[45] Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer V*, 51, n. 1. This also explains the past tense which the angel used to announce Anna's conception.

[46] Cunningham, 'All-Holy Infant', 141.

[47] L. Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, trans. T. Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 36.

[48] PG 126, 141; PG 98, 312A; PG 100, 1436A and 1453A.

[49] Van der Horst, '"Seven Months" Children', 359–60.

[50] B. D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that did Not Make it into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15; S. C. Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1998), 216–22. For the dating of the text to the first half of the second c., see E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher (eds.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. M. Wilson (London: SCM Press, 1974), vol. 1, 176.

[51] E. Schwartz and T. Mommsen (eds.), *Eusebius' Werke II* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903), part I, 252: ἤδη δ᾽ ἐν τούτοις τινὲς καὶ τὸ καθ᾽ Ἑβραίους εὐαγγέλιον κατέλεξαν … ταῦτα δὲ ἐάντα τῶν ἀντιλεγομένων ἂν εἴη᾽.

[52] For a translation of this fragment, see A. J. F. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 135; Hennecke and Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, 177. For its date in the first half of the second century, see Schneemelcher, *New Testament*

Klijn argues that the author of the Hebrew Gospel wanted to *refute* the idea that Mary was of heavenly origin;[53] this corresponds to the view of Theodore the Stoudite, who denied her existence through the centuries in one of his letters.[54] And it is exactly this idea that is the basis for understanding the function of the seven-month birth in Tarasios' homily. The *Gospel of the Hebrews* and Tarasios' reference to heretics suggests that the belief in the seven-month gestation had Jewish origins and it was exactly these Jewish roots which had to be excised from the rising cult of Mary.

By using anti-Jewish polemic in Marian homilies, Patriarch Tarasios reinforced the significance of Mary's early life and defended the legitimacy of the apocryphal text according to its later version (in which her gestation lasts a full nine months). What mattered to the eighth-century preacher was not so much the persuasiveness of his arguments, but rather an acknowledgement of Mary's immediate ancestors in response to Iconoclast theological challenges. Cameron comments as follows about this process:

> abundant writings on heresy in the early Christian period in fact pale in comparison with the vast amount of such writings in Byzantium, whether in the context of homilies, treatises, disputations or heresiology proper. This veritable obsession with defining and condemning every form of wrong belief created a discourse of citation, polarity and tradition, in which what mattered was less a matter of whether the specific arguments were subtle or convincing in each particular compilation than the cumulative effect they had on the promotion of cultural norms.[55]

Similarly, the subject of St Anna's pregnancy became a theological battlefield, whose resolution contributed to the doctrine of the incarnation since it emphasised the humanity of Christ's forebears at a time when this had to be defended by the iconophile party.

Entry into the Temple

The final element to be treated in this chapter is the preachers' defence of the lack of emotion that the Virgin showed towards her parents before her

Apocrypha, vol. 1, 176. Elliott, Hennecke and Schneemelcher do not include Cyril's reference to the Gospel; see ibid., 5. For the history of the text, see Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, 172–8; O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik (eds.), *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 245–50, with extensive bibliography on 247, n. 23.

53 Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 136.

54 See also Shoemaker's discussion of Mary's heavenly origin in the present volume.

55 A. Cameron, 'Enforcing Orthodoxy in Byzantium', in K. Cooper and J. Gregory (eds.), *Discipline and Diversity,* Studies in Church History 43 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 19.

Entry into the Temple.[56] Doula Mourike was right to highlight the spiritual maturity of the Virgin at the time of her Entry into the Temple, but she did not remark on the theological importance of Mary's impassive behaviour in this context.

According to Byzantine homilies, Mary disdained her mother's loving embrace and instead chose God because she was aware of her predestined role in the divine *oikonomia*.[57] In depictions of the Entry scene, Mary is often depicted as a robust miniature of an adult woman, so as to reflect both her early age and her emotional maturity.[58] She is an 'elderly child', 'exceptional from birth, exhibiting mature behaviours and acute spiritual sensibility long before adulthood'.[59] The acknowledgement of Mary's exceptional nature by her parents is revealed in passages such as the following: 'The parental insides were not touched when they left Mary to the Temple; they did not turn back to her', according to Gregory Palamas.[60] The allusion to the *possibility* of family warmth, while in fact portraying impassivity in both Mary and her parents on this occasion, does not appear for the first time here: this theme dates back to the seventh century. Influenced by the story of the *Protevangelium*, (ps-) Demetrios of Antioch, in his version of Mary's childhood, writes: 'And when she had gone into [the Temple] she did not turn back to come out again, neither did one thought of her parents rise up in her heart, nor any thought of any earthly thing'.[61] Mary's emotional distancing from her parents in Byzantine homilies contrasts with the portrayal of her motherly affection and increased expressions of emotion as a mature

[56] This element first appeared in Byzantine homilies but was based on the reference of the *Protevangelium* that the virgins held lamps in order that Mary would not turn back; see Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, 429.

[57] … καὶ προκρίνει τὸν Θεὸν τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς ἀγκαλῶν καὶ τῶν κατ᾽οἶκον σαινόντων τὸν Θεοῦ *νεὼν*; see Christou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ*, vol. 11, 292; C. Veniamin (trans.), *St Gregory Palamas. The Homilies* (Waymart, PA: Mt Thabor Publishing, 2009), 29.

[58] E. Croce, 'Anna, madre di Maria Vergine', in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* (Rome: Pontifical Lateran University, 1961), vol. 1, 1288.

[59] P. Hatlie, 'The Religious Lives of Children and Adolescents', in D. Krueger (ed.), *Byzantine Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 189.

[60] PG 127, 624D.

[61] E. A. W. Budge (trans.), *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1915), 655. This discourse was intended to be read on the feast of Christ's Nativity (Budge (trans.), *Miscellaneous*, 652) and was probably written sometime after the invasion of Egypt in 642; see M. Sheridan, *From the Nile to the Rhone and Beyond: Studies in Early Monastic Literature and Scriptural Interpretation* (Rome: Pontificio Aterneo Sant' Anselmo, 2012), 235. The text survives in Coptic and the manuscript published by Budge dates back to 975 (*Miscellaneous*, p. xxxvi), but an even earlier version dated to 913–14 was published by Campagnano; see A. Campagnano (ed. and trans.), *Ps. Cirillo di Gerusalemme, Omelie copte: sulla passione, sulla croce e sulla Vergine* (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1980), 18. For a German translation, see S. Bombeck, 'Pseudo-Kyrillos *In Mariam virginem*: Text und Übersetzung von Pierpont Morgan M 597 fols. 46–74', *Orientalia* 70 (2001): 40–88.

woman after Iconoclasm, as highlighted by Kalavrezou.[62] In order to highlight Mary's emotionally detached Entry into the Holy of Holies, George of Nikomedia uses a touching picture from real life of a child being separated from its mother, crying and holding out its hands towards her.[63] He states that Mary behaved in this way because she was not aware of her role in the divine dispensation. Emphasis on emotions shows their importance as ideas concerning motherhood, human nature and God's incarnation developed. Thus, whereas the divine dispensation dictates that procreation (along with loving parenthood) is necessary in order to substantiate God's plan, the denial of such attachments is also significant. Overall, the motherhood of Anna, as described in festal sermons, is filled with dogmatic nuances because beneath its celebration lay a battlefield where the Byzantines responded to challenges related to Mary's childhood. The incarnation was the lever that provoked homilists' responses to such accusations; whatever interfered with Chalcedonian doctrine concerning Christ's concurrent humanity and divinity required opposition.

The texts described above are supported by visual imagery. The function of images is, however, different from that of texts, since art does not resolve dogmatic issues but rather promulgates them. This is shown in the portraits of Anna and Joachim that either stand alone or are included in the Mariological cycle (that is, the pictorial life of Mary) and pronounce the message of the incarnation. For the purposes of the present chapter, a few examples of iconic portraits of Anna and Joachim are selected, which show the importance of Mary's childhood for the Byzantine artisans who created them. The selection is dictated by the fact that Anna and Joachim were included in the Marian cycle thanks to their biological relationship with Mary, which celebrates the events that fulfil biblical prophecies on the coming of Christ to earth. In this regard, the Mariological cycle does not provide evidence for a developing cult of Mary's parents. The iconic portraits, however, do suggest devotion for Anna and Joachim as holy figures in their own right.

The iconographical programmes of churches were the result of careful design, with every depiction carrying a particular message. Therefore, the

[62] I. Kalavrezou, 'Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became *Meter Theou*', *DOP* 44 (1990): 168; Kalavrezou, 'The Maternal Side of the Virgin', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Milan and Athens: Skira, 2000), 41–5. This is also the case with James Kokkinobaphos, who describes a tender image between Anna and Mary (not however part of the Entry scene), in which Anna lifts her daughter up and 'kisses her repeatedly' (= 'κατεφίλει'), demonstrating her tenderness; see PG 127, 592A.

[63] PG 100, 1448D–1449B.

representation of the Virgin's parents was important because it depicted contemporary notions of their role in the *civitas dei*. The imagery of Sts Anna and Joachim strictly defines them within the incarnational process and attributes purely Christological nuances to their cult. In this respect, Byzantine church iconography elevated genealogy to defend the incarnation of Christ.

From the time of her earliest depictions, St Anna was promoted as a mother. An example is found in Faras (today an area in southern Egypt and northern Sudan), where the 'Cathedral of Paul', dated to 707, contains a depiction of St Anna that dates to the early eighth century.[64] The image is accompanied by an inscription in Greek: 'Anna, Mother of the Theotokos, [the] saint and Mary'.[65] Jakobielski notes that the inscription implies either that Mary was also included in the depiction or that the most correct reading of the inscription should be: 'Anna, mother of the Theotokos, saint, and Mariatokos'. In this very first mural iconic portrait, St Anna's motherhood is highlighted because of the major role that she played in Christ's incarnation. Her portrait is located on the northern wall of the nave, very close to the sanctuary. Proximity to the sanctuary gave prominence over the rest of the saints who were depicted in the church; it also proclaimed Anna's incarnational purpose in God's plan for the salvation of humankind. The eighth-century portrait of St Anna in the Faras cathedral represents one of the earliest indications that she was interpreted in Byzantine religious thought as the venerable mother of the Mother of God, a title to which she owed her cult in Byzantium.

With regard to the imagery of Mary, Anna and Joachim (since Mourike uses an example where the three figures coexist in one scene), representations from Crete show in a more elaborate way how Byzantine art illustrated the materialisation of the incarnation through parenthood. In the church of St Anna at Anisaraki in Chania (1352) Anna is depicted in the templon as a woman of advanced age, holding Mary on her left arm.[66] Joachim is depicted near Anna on the northern wall, thus creating a 'family portrait'.[67] In comparison to Faras, the iconography at Anisaraki is much richer, including

[64] For a detailed examination of the iconography of the Virgin and St Anna in this church, see E. Panou, 'The *signum harpocraticum* in the Eighth-Century Christian Art of Nubia', in S. Maltseva and E. Stanyukovich-Denisova (eds.), *Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art V: Collection of Articles* (St Petersburg: NP-Print Publications, 2015), 244–60.

[65] 'Η αγία Άννα η μήτηρ της θεοτόκ[ος] (sic) η αγία κ(αί) Μα[ρ…]' (sic).

[66] G. Passarelli, *Creta tra Bisanzio e Venezia* (Milan: Jaca Books, 2007), 127, fig. 136, 129; T. Xanthaki, 'Ο ναός της Αγίας Άννας στο Ανισαράκι Κάνδανου: Ο κύκλος της Αγίας, οι αφιερωτές, η χρονολόγηση', *DChAE* 31 (2010): 71.

[67] Xanthaki, 'Ο ναός', 72.

the Virgin's father Joachim, seraphs, angels, apostles, without altering the message that is conveyed through images: this is the praise of Christ's female lineage and genealogy in a broader context that led to his incarnation and the salvation of mankind. In addition, we read in the *Protevangelium* that, having been presented in the Temple by her parents at the age of three, Mary lived there until the age of twelve. After this time she was engaged in spinning (Μαριὰμ δὲ λαβοῦσα τὸ κόκκινον ἔκλωθεν).[68] The Virgin's work on the veil of the Temple is an activity consistent with the incarnation because the labour of Mary's hand symbolises the fecundity of her womb.[69] Visual evidence from the twelfth century onwards shows that, in several regions of the Byzantine Empire, the *mandylion* (a piece of cloth upon which an image of the face of Jesus Christ had been miraculously imprinted) was placed in the sanctuary in conjunction with the Annunciation of Mary because it was this event that proclaimed the incarnation of the Logos.[70] In Crete, from the last decade of the thirteenth until the middle of the fifteenth century, Mary's parents were depicted jointly with the holy *mandylion*, the holy *kerameion* (a tile imprinted with the face of Jesus Christ, miraculously transferred by contact with the *mandylion*) and Mary's Annunciation.[71] An example of this is found in the church of St George in Sklavopoula of Selino, Chania (1290–1). The *mandylion* is depicted in the sanctuary; beneath it are Sts Joachim and Anna in medallions, while Mary's Annunciation is placed underneath them.[72] Also, on the triumphal arch of the eastern wall of the early fourteenth-century Church of Christ's Transfiguration in Zouridi,[73] the *mandylion* and the *kerameion* are framed by the Annunciation of Mary,

68 Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 20.

69 Gerstel, 'An Alternate View', 174. See also H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 47; F. Badalanova-Geller, 'The Spinning of Mary: Towards the Iconology of the Annunciation', *Cosmos* 20 (2004): 211–60.

70 G. Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004), 128; T. Velmans, 'Valeurs sémantiques du Mandylion selon son emplacement ou son association avec d'autres images', in B. Borkopp, B. Schellewald and L. Theis (eds.), *Studien zur byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte: Festschrift für Horst Hallensleben zum 65. Geburtstag* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1995), 178–9; M. Evangelatou, 'Pursuing Salvation through a Body of Parchment: Books and their Significance in the Illustrated Homilies of Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos', *MS* 68 (2006): 261–79.

71 For the association between the Annunciation of Mary and Christ's humanity, see H. Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantin et occidental du XIe au XVe siécle: l'Annonciation* (Venice: Institut hellénique d'études byzantines et post-byzantines de Venise, 2007), 227–40.

72 Spatharakis, *Dated Byzantine Wall Paintings*, 12; S. Papadaki-Oekland, 'Το Άγιο Μανδήλιο ως το νέο σύμβολο σε ένα αρχαίο εικονογραφικό σχήμα', *DChAE* 14 (1987–8): 283.

73 I. Spatharakis, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete, vol. 1: Rethymnon Province* (London: Pindar, 1999), 268.

where Anna is placed above Mary and Joachim above Gabriel.[74] Anna and Joachim 'frame' the event that initiated the salvific plan of God through the incarnation of Christ. The analogy demonstrates their role in the divine *oikonomia* and marks the importance of paying respect to Christ's apocryphal genealogy.

The above-mentioned examples corroborate my argument in the first half of this chapter: the imagery of St Anna was given iconographical associations, all of which conveyed the message of the incarnation in one way or another. Images reveal the orthodox Byzantine view of Mary's parents, just as preachers attempted to smooth every 'thorn' in the Virgin's legendary past. The above examples show that, despite their apocryphal credentials, the appearance of Joachim and Anna in family portraits or in proximity to scenes from Mary's adulthood, as seen in the examples from Crete, highlights their soteriological role in an unpretentious manner. Their function is to present in various ways the unchanging truth of Christian teaching, namely, that the salvation of humanity takes place through the incarnation of Christ.

Conclusion

In Byzantine homilies, Mary's early history, even before her conception, was equated with the beginning of God's plan for human salvation. In this framework, eighth- and ninth-century homilies that dealt with Mary's early life not only shaped the way in which Mary's parents were perceived from that time onward, but also demonstrated their connection with the doctrine of the incarnation of the Logos. This process is embedded in the growing emphasis on parental attachment over the course of the Iconoclast controversy; Mary's emotional distance from her parents at her Entrance into the Temple merely reinforces this theme. It was presented as an agenda against the iconoclasts and thus facilitated the introduction of the *Protevangelium* into the very heart of Constantinople's liturgical life. Art served the dogma of the incarnation and thus the walls of Byzantine churches began to be filled with non-narrative images of Joachim and Anna that illustrated the Christological importance of Mary's parents in Eastern Christian theology.

The study of texts reveals Byzantine belief in the importance of the life of the Mother of God not only before the birth of Christ, but even before she herself was born. The engagement of homilists with Mary's infancy reflects the fact that whatever took place between her conception and the entrance

[74] Ibid., 265–6.

into the Temple was predestined to serve the incarnation of her Son. In this respect, attributing importance to events of the Virgin's life, based on her imagery as an infant, as a young girl or as an adult woman, leads to distortion first of how the Byzantines appreciated the apocryphal past of the Virgin and secondly of the figurative meaning of her stature in Christian art. The Iconoclast controversy caused theologians to reflect again on the earthly origins of Christ; it is in this context that Byzantine preachers 'rediscovered' the second-century *Protevangelium of James.* However, they were surely the first writers to respect the narrative in a way that befits a work containing the life of the Virgin as a child. Homilies on the Conception, the Nativity and the Entry of Mary promoted an understanding of the importance of parenthood with respect to the doctrine of the incarnation; such an insight was missing from the canonical texts. In an attempt to harmonise the apocryphal past of the Virgin with the canonical Gospels in particular, the Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras (1295–1360) explained in a sermon dedicated to Mary's early life from her Nativity until the Entry, why this period was not included in the Gospels or in works of the early Church Fathers, as follows:

> even if the Evangelists are silent about her, one should not be surprised by it. It resembles what happens when a huge bunch of grapes grows on a vine: since it is not easy to carry it even in a big cart, it is natural for those who see it (that is, the bunch) to forget it in the long run rather than to marvel at the root and be surprised by the size of the fruit. So what happened later to the Virgin appealed to both mind and speech, but what happened before was kept silent.[75]

Nikephoros implies here that the events of Mary's early life were ignored because the Church was mostly concerned with her giving birth to Christ:

> Her birth-giving and continuing virginity, along with the fact that she gave birth to God although she was human, superseded all miracles. This is why one should not wonder if most of the apostles and teachers of the Church are silent about this (that is, Mary's life before Christ), even though it was of great importance.[76]

Passages such as this reveal that Byzantine writers were engaged in decoding the paradox that lay behind Christ's own birth. And it is to the work of Byzantine preachers that we largely owe the shaping of a new attitude towards the Virgin's apocryphal past in Byzantium.

[75] *Λόγος εἰς την Ὑπεραγιαν Θεοτόκον διαλαμβανων τήν τε γέννησιν αὐτης και τήν εἰς τα ἅγια των ἁγίων εἰσοδον καί ἀνατροφήν αὐτης;* see P. L. M. Leone, 'Nicephori Gregorae de sanctissima deiparae matovotate presentatione atque educatione oratio', *Quaderni catanesi di cultura classica e medievale* 3 (1991): 26, 635–42.

[76] Ibid., 27, 644–28, 663.

4 Krater of Nectar and Altar of the Bread of Life

The Theotokos as Provider of the Eucharist in Byzantine Culture

MARIA EVANGELATOU*

> Your belly became a holy table, having the heavenly bread, and whoever eats from it does not die …[1]

One of the most emblematic visual productions of the Middle and Late Byzantine periods is the image of the Mother of God in the sanctuary apse. Either enthroned or standing, with her son or alone, and often flanked by angels, the Theotokos dominates the space of the sanctuary; and if she rises above the templon screen, as is usually the case, she also dominates the space of the entire church, becoming a major focal point for the gaze of the viewers (Figures 4.1–2, 4.5–6, 4.10, 4.15–16). This prominence of Mary in apse decoration and by extension in the visual context of the Eucharist in post-iconoclast Byzantium is well known in scholarly literature.[2] Likewise, her exaltation as a powerful mediator for human salvation in the Byzantine liturgical tradition, through her praise in hymns and homilies used during the year, is another well-known aspect of her prominent presence in the context of the liturgy.[3] In this chapter I aim to explore one more thread in the rich textile of Marian references in the space of Byzantine churches, which up to now has received little attention: namely, the idea that the Theotokos dominates the apse not only as Mother of God and mediatrix, but also as provider of the Eucharist.[4] Theologically

* I would like to thank Gabrielle Greenlee for her work as my research assistant for this chapter. I am also grateful to Mary Cunningham, Ivan Drpic, Allan Landgale, Vasilis Marinis, Maria Parani and Annemarie Weyl Carr for sharing photographic and bibliographic material with me. Special thanks to Vasilis Marinis and the editors of this volume for providing feedback on the first draft. Unless otherwise noted, translations are mine. Old Testament references are according to the Septuagint available on the TLG.

[1] Andrew of Crete, *Theotokion to Ode 5*, *Kanon on Mid-Pentecost* (*CPG* 8219), PG 97, 1425C.

[2] E.g. A. Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα τοῦ ἱεροῦ βήματος τῶν μεσοβυζαντινῶν ναῶν τῆς Ἑλλάδας (843–1204)* (Athens: University of Athens, 2001), 57–83.

[3] Several relevant chapters are included in this volume. For an overview of the subject, see J. Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie de Byzance* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1976). Also A. Kniazeff, *La Mère de Dieu dans l'Église Orthodoxe* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990), esp. 157–202.

[4] I use the terms Divine Liturgy and Eucharist interchangeably to refer to the same ritual (corresponding to the Mass of the Catholic tradition). Lower case 'liturgy' refers collectively to all the rites of the Byzantine Church. Although according to Byzantine theology the

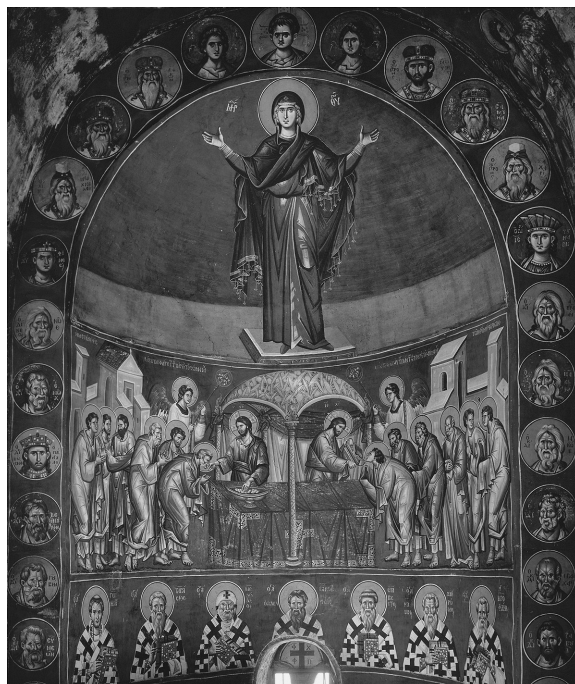

Figure 4.1 The Virgin *oran*s, the Communion of the Apostles, busts of hierarchs, and medallions with Christ's ancestors and prophets (flanking medallions with Christ Emmanuel and two archangels at the apex of the arch). Sanctuary apse of the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (today Church of St Clement of Ohrid), late thirteenth century, Ohrid, North Macedonia (photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

speaking, this is a very fitting reference: according to Byzantine orthodox dogma, the eucharistic bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ.[5] Therefore, as the one who gave birth to him, the Theotokos can be perceived as provider of the Eucharist as well. Yet the notion that Byzantine viewers would have seen Mary in the apse in this eucharistic light merits detailed exploration if we are to understand the wider implications of this theme. Which cultural parameters supported such a eucharistic identification, including textual sources and ritual practices which would have influenced the perception of the viewers? Which visual elements were employed to

consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist are the body/flesh and blood of Christ respectively, for brevity I frequently use the term 'body' to refer to both, since in physiological terms a body also includes blood, and in theological terms the eucharistic bread and wine are one and the same Christ whose body suffered on the cross.

[5] S. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 45–7.

emphasise the eucharistic references of Mary in the apse? What were the specific theological implications of these eucharistic references in the context of the Divine Liturgy or more broadly within the holy space of the church? And in terms of personal experience, how would Byzantine men, women and children internalise such references to Mary, as the one who births the holy food of their salvation?[6] In the following pages some of these issues will be discussed in two sections, focusing respectively on textual and visual sources, in order to introduce some structure that may assist contemporary audiences to better understand the rich and complex material at our disposal. Yet I do not imply in any way that the images to be discussed were illustrations of relevant texts. Texts and images were equally important components of the cultural synthesis of Byzantium, in which people's experience was defined by the rich interaction of verbal, visual and other sensorial stimuli, especially in the context of ritual.[7]

The Theotokos and the Eucharist: Textual Sources

Byzantine literature is rich in more or less explicit references to the Theotokos as bearer and provider of Christ's eucharistic body, since she contained in her womb the same divine body that is reborn in the church sanctuary, the 'womb' of the church, during the Divine Liturgy.[8] In fact, in Byzantine theology the analogy between the incarnation and the Eucharist extended beyond that of the enfleshment of God inside a material yet sacred container (Mary and the eucharistic vessels), in order to encompass the actual process of the transformation: in the same way that the Holy Spirit descended upon Mary during the Annunciation to create the body of Christ from her own

6 I hope to explore this specific question in a future publication with the provisional title 'Birthing Holy Food: Byzantine Perceptions of the Theotokos in the Context of the Eucharist'. That work will also examine the concept of Mary's priesthood.

7 Compare the term 'synaesthesis', coined by Bissera Pentcheva to emphasise the participation of all five senses in Byzantine cultural experiences, with the Eucharist being the most salient case. See Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 2, n. 5. See also C. Nesbitt and M. Jackson (eds.), *Experiencing Byzantium* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), with various relevant essays.

8 See detailed references below. The idea of the apse as a womb may be inferred, for example, from Patriarch Germanos' observations in his *Ecclesiastical History* 3 and 41 (*CPG* 8023): 'The apse corresponds to the cave in Bethlehem where Christ was born, as well as the cave in which he was buried'. Further on, Germanos describes the transubstantiation of bread and wine into Christ's flesh and blood as a birth that takes place after his burial. For Greek text and English translation see P. Meyendorff (trans.), *St Germanus of Constantinople. On the Divine Liturgy* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1984), 58–9, 88–9, 96–7.

flesh and blood, so was the Spirit believed to descend upon the altar with the eucharistic vessels in order to transubstantiate the bread and wine into his flesh and blood.[9] In other words, the Theotokos was the archetypal wheat-sheaf or vine, as well as the living paten, chalice and altar without which the mysteries of the incarnation and the Eucharist would be impossible. In the evocative words of (ps-) John of Damascus concerning the Annunciation, Mary was the one 'through whom we taste the true and immortal bread'.[10] Indeed, speaking of the Theotokos in eucharistic terms reinforces the basic theological tenet of the Byzantine Church that the Eucharist is the body of Christ, born and sacrificed for the salvation of the world.

Given the physical aspects of the Eucharist, that is, food contained in holy vessels, some of the main references to the Theotokos as provider of the Eucharist in Byzantine literature are expressed in relevant metaphorical terms: she is hailed as a holy container, or producer and provider of nourishment. The terms I discuss below first appeared in abundance in the homilies of Proclus of Constantinople (fifth century) and in the *Akathistos Hymn* (fifth or sixth century), although they were known even earlier; they were extensively employed by the eighth century – for example in the writings of Andrew of Crete, Germanos of Constantinople and John of Damascus – and they were widely diffused in the hymns and homilies of the Middle and Late Byzantine periods, when most of the visual material to be discussed was also produced.[11] Given this diffusion, in the following analysis I will provide a rather small sample of relevant sources: I will use Eustratiades'

[9] Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 178–80. The English term 'transubstantiation' is an accurate translation of the Greek μετουσίωσις (from οὐσία, 'substance'). Therefore, I prefer 'transubstantiation' over 'transformation', since the latter etymologically relates not to substance but to form (μορφή, compare *metamorphosis* for Christ's Transfiguration). The idea that Christ's body was formed from Mary's blood was very widespread in Byzantine culture and reflects both the medical theories of the time about the formation of a foetus and the dogmatic importance of Mary as the human mother of God who made the incarnation possible. According to the medical Graeco-Roman tradition that was still alive in Byzantium, the mother feeds the foetus through her blood – an opinion based on the fact that menstrual bleeding ceases during pregnancy. See the various primary sources and secondary literature mentioned by D. Leitao, *The Pregnant Male as Myth and Metaphor in Classical Greek Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 20–8, 30, 33, 36. Also see N. Hopwood, R. Flemming and L. Kassell (eds.), *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Byzantine authors frequently refer to Mary's 'virginal blood' as the substance out of which Christ's body was formed. A search of the words παρθενικῶν αἱμάτων in TLG provides at least eighty different uses, almost all of which refer to Mary's role in the incarnation.

[10] Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 178; (ps-) John of Damascus, *On the Annunciation*, (*CPG* 8118; BHG 1116d), PG 96, 656D–657A. On the dubious authenticity of this work, see J. M. Hoeck, 'Stand und Aufgaben der Damaskenos-Forschung', *OCP* 17 (1951): 40, n. 96.

[11] See M. B. Cunningham, 'Divine Banquet: The Theotokos as a Source of Spiritual Nourishment', in L. Brubaker and K. Linardou (eds.), *Eat, Drink, and Be Merry (Luke 12:19) – Food and Wine in Byzantium* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 235–44. For translations

work on the Theotokos as indicative of hymnographic references,[12] and occasionally I will augment this body of material with passages from homiletic sources. It should be emphasised that the terms discussed are not technical words describing challenging theological concepts, but typological references based on biblical narratives (for example, about the Tabernacle), or poetic metaphors based on daily experience (for example, related to nourishment). In Byzantine hymns and homilies, such terms were often mentioned together as a group of vivid verbal images, and thus they were clear and understandable to a church audience.[13] In addition, many of the homilies that contained such terms were read on feast-days, during the first part of the eucharistic celebration (the Liturgy of the Word),[14] and thus their eucharistic references to Mary were highlighted by the ritual context in which the homilies were performed. The same applied to a large part of the hymnographic material, sung in the context of feasts that culminated with the Divine Liturgy. In other words, such verbal performances were part of a larger ritual and multisensorial setting, which also included relevant visual imagery that interacted with the aural. Additionally, the congregation could participate in the performance of hymns, by singing along.[15] Clearly, Byzantine audiences were in a much better position than we can ever be to recognise multiple connections between Mary and the Eucharist since they were immersed in the totality of a generative sacred space and time, of which only disjointed fragments survive today.

In the following pages I have systematised the textual references under different themes. However, in order to emphasise that in their original context such references were intertwined in ways that reinforced their common eucharistic meaning, I introduce each theme with quotes from the *Akathistos Hymn*.[16] Needless to say, the evocative vividness of the original language is lost in translation.

in English of several relevant homilies see M. B. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008).

12 S. Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ* (Paris: Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion, 1930).

13 R. Taft, *Through their own Eyes: Liturgy as the Byzantines Saw it* (Berkeley, CA: Inter-Orthodox Press, 2006), 84–7, and 79–81, n. 19.

14 Ibid., 79–87.

15 Ibid., 60–7. See also Frank's and Arentzen's chapters in the present volume.

16 Greek text and English translation in L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). The *Akathistos Hymn* (fifth- or sixth-century) can be justly regarded as the most famous work of Byzantine hymnography. It has exerted a strong influence upon Marian textual and visual production and it still plays a central role in the Eastern Orthodox liturgical tradition (since it is recited every year during Lent).

> Hail, receptacle of the Wisdom of God; hail, treasury of his providence … Hail, krater wherein is mixed the wine of fervent joy; hail, scent of Christ's fragrance; Hail, life of the mystical banquet.[17]

Mary was repeatedly hailed in Byzantine literature as the vessel of Christ, and as the most pure and sacred receptacle of life, light, divinity and salvation.[18] Such references may *implicitly* present her as a eucharistic container, since the Eucharist itself offers the body and blood of Christ who is the Light of the World, and is believed to provide salvation and everlasting life.[19] Even the frequent descriptions of the Theotokos as source, fountain, stream or river can point to her as provider of the Eucharist, especially when she gushes forth an edible or drinkable sweet substance (such as nectar, ambrosia or manna), or procures waters of life, immortality, incorruptibility, healing and salvation.[20] Yet in several hymns and homilies the identification of Mary as provider of the Eucharist is made *explicit*: she is hailed not simply as a sacred vessel, but specifically as one that holds the eucharistic gifts, and she is literally called 'paten' or 'chalice'.[21] In addition, she is often praised as the holy krater, which offers bliss and everlasting life to those who drink from it.[22] Since the krater is a vessel for the mixing of water and wine, the term was used to refer to the eucharistic chalice where the same elements were mixed according to Byzantine practice.[23] The motif of the krater can be also seen as a reference to the womb of the Theotokos, where Christ's two natures, human and divine, were united, exactly as they are in his eucharistic body and blood contained in the paten and chalice.[24]

17 *Akathistos* 17.6–7; 21.1–17. Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin*, 14–17. In this and following quotations I slightly depart from Peltomaa's translations in order to keep closer to the original Greek. For the mystical banquet (μυστικὴ εὐωχία) as a reference to the Eucharist, see Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), s.v. εὐωχία.

18 Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 18–19 (δοχεῖον), 71 (σκεῦος), 76 (ταμεῖον).

19 For the healing and salvific power of the Eucharist, see G. Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy: The Symbolism of Early Christian and Byzantine Bread Stamps* (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 6, 51.

20 Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 34 (κρήνη), 60 (πηγάζουσα), 61–2 (πηγή), 64 (ποταμός, ποτίζουσα), 69 (ῥεῖθρον). Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 79–80. Lampe, *Lexicon* s.v.v. ἀμβρόσιος, ἀμβροσιώδης (referring to the Eucharist). The Eucharist was regularly described as 'sweet' in Byzantine texts, for example, in a vision of the eucharistic banquet at Heavenly Jerusalem in the *Life* of Basil the Younger, discussed in Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*, 158. For the manna (sweet according to Ex 16:31) as a prefiguration of the Eucharist, see later in this chapter.

21 Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 12 (βαστάσασα), 17 (δίσκος), 40 (κύπελλον).

22 Ibid., 38 (κρατήρ).

23 Lampe, *Lexicon* s.v. κρατήρ.

24 For the presence of Christ's two natures in the Eucharist, see the references to leavened bread mentioned later.

> Hail, table that bears a wealth of mercy … Hail, food that succeeds the manna … We all praise you as a living Temple, O Theotokos … Hail, Tabernacle of God and the Logos; Hail, greater than the Holy of Holies; Hail, ark gilded by the Spirit … [25]

It is common in Byzantine literature to refer to the Virgin as the altar table, often specifically described as holding the heavenly bread, the bread of life or the bread that provides nourishment to the faithful.[26] Depending on their exact wording and context, such references might bring to mind either the altar in Christian churches or the table of showbread (altar of offerings) that stood before the Holy of Holies inside the Tabernacle and later in the Jewish Temple.[27] Alternatively the term *trapeza* ('table') might allude to both the Jewish and the Christian altar: a clear distinction is unnecessary since the table of showbread was considered a prefiguration of Mary both as the living altar of Christ and as the Christian altar table.[28] The fluidity of such references underlines the belief that through Mary and her role in the incarnation, the old dispensation was replaced by the new, bringing salvation through Christ and his eucharistic sacrifice.

In addition, Mary is regularly hailed in hymns and homilies as the Tabernacle, the Temple, the Holy of Holies and the jar of manna.[29] All of these Marian types could be said to have eucharistic connotations, since they present the Theotokos as a holy site or container of edible offerings and sacrifices to God, replaced in the Christian tradition by the church, its sanctuary and holy vessels for the performance of the Eucharist. The jar of manna has the most obvious eucharistic significance, since it contained heavenly God-sent nourishment that prefigured the real heavenly bread, Christ himself.[30] The eucharistic connotations of the other terms become more obvious if we consider that in Byzantine texts they were used to describe not only the Jewish Tabernacle/Temple and Mary, but also the Christian church and its sanctuary.[31] Another sacred container housed in the Jewish Holy of Holies,

[25] *Akathistos* 5.11; 11.14; 23. 2, 6–8; Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin*, 6–7, 10–11, 18–19.

[26] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 79 (τράπεζα); Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 74.

[27] Ex 25:23–30.

[28] Compare Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catecheses* 4.5 (on the Eucharist) (*CPG* 3585) in F. Cross (ed. and trans.), *St Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1995), 27, 69.

[29] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 2 (ἁγίασμα), 30 (ἱλαστήριον), 35 (κιβωτός), 47–8 (ναός), 51 (οἶκος), 71–3 (σκηνή, σκῆνος, σκήνωμα, στάμνος), 79 (τόπος ἁγιάσματος). Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 71–4, 77–8. Kniazeff, *La mère*, 157–8, for Old Testament passages on the Tabernacle and the Temple that were read at feast days in honour of Mary. See also Olkinuora's chapter in the present volume.

[30] Jn 6:6–58, esp. 26–58.

[31] Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v.v. ἁγίασμα (1), ἱλαστήριον (2a, 2d), ναός (I), οἶκος (3–4), σκηνή (A), τόπος (5–6). Mary is also described in terms applied primarily to the Christian church and its

the ark with the tablets of the law, was also considered a prefiguration of Mary as vessel of the living Law, Christ. Although the tablets were neither edible nor sacrificial, their location, containment and Christological significance could suggest that the perception of the Theotokos as the ark might also have eucharistic connotations. The placement of the jar of manna in front of or inside the ark could corroborate such a meaning.[32] Patriarch Germanos states that the ciborium above the altar on which the Eucharist was performed corresponds to the ark overshadowed by two cherubim.[33] The image of Mary flanked by two angels in the apses of many Byzantine churches also recalls this connection between the ark and the altar table, both of which were embodied in the Theotokos (Figures 4.2, 4.5, 4.18–19).[34]

The golden censer that stood before the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the Temple was also a vessel of sacrifice (in the form of incense burning).[35] In Byzantine literature, it is mentioned as another type of the Theotokos, the container of Christ the divine coal, who sacrifices himself like incense in order to purify the world with his perfume.[36] Censing is also a prominent part of the Divine Liturgy and is especially directed towards the holy gifts and the altar table.[37] In its vapour and fragrance, incense sensorialises the presence of the Holy Spirit,[38] through which the bread and wine are transubstantiated into Christ's body in the same way that Mary's blood was transformed into the body of the incarnate Logos at the Annunciation. In the context of the Divine Liturgy, the perception of Mary as incense-bearer highlights her role in materialising the invisible God through both the incarnation and the Eucharist.[39] The eucharistic connotations of Mary as the golden censer and holder of the divine coal are also relevant to the Christian exegesis of Isaiah 6:6–7, in which a seraphim

sanctuary: αγιαστήριον, Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 2; Lampe, *Lexicon* s.v. ἱερόν; Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 30; Lampe, *Lexicon* s.v. ἱερός (3a).

[32] Ex 16:31–4; Heb 9:3–4.

[33] Germanos, *Ecclesiastical History* 5, trans. Meyendorff, *Germanus*, 58–9.

[34] Several other reasons for the depiction of angels flanking Mary in the apse are mentioned by Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 83–8.

[35] Ex 30:1–10.

[36] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 29 (θυμιατήριον, θυσιαστήριον χρυσοῦν), 68 (πυράγρα). M. Evangelatou, 'The Symbolism of the Censer in Byzantine Representations of the Dormition of the Virgin', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005) 117–32, esp. 121–5.

[37] R. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-Anaphoral Rites* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1978), 149–62.

[38] Pentcheva, *Sensual Icon*, 40–3.

[39] Patriarch Germanos notes in his *Ecclesiastical History* 30 that 'the belly of the censer may be understood as the sanctified womb of the holy Virgin and Theotokos who bore the divine coal, Christ … perfuming the world' (trans. adjusted from Meyendorff, *Germanus*, 78–81).

Figure 4.2 Enthroned Mary and Christ with bowing archangels and co-celebrating hierarchs converging towards the Melismos (Christ on the altar) below the window, in front of the church altar. Sanctuary apse of the Church of St George, late twelfth century, Kurbinovo, North Macedonia (photo: David Lewis).

uses tongs to take a coal from the altar (either the golden altar of incense or the altar of burnt offerings), and places it on the prophet's lips so that he is purified and his sins are forgiven. In Byzantine tradition the tongs are a prefiguration of Mary holding the divine coal Christ, and the whole vision is a prefiguration of the Eucharist, which purifies and absolves by touching the lips of the faithful.[40] Indeed, in Greek the word for 'tongs' (*labis*) is also a term for the spoon used in the Eucharist.[41] It therefore evokes the image of Mary holding in her arms the divine coal, Christ, in both his historical and eucharistic body.[42]

[40] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 40 (λαβίς); cf. Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 69–70. See also K. Linardou, 'Depicting the Salvation: Typological Images of Mary in the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 146–7, nn. 59–60.

[41] Lampe, *Lexicon* s.v. λαβίς (II).

[42] In the twelfth-century liturgical commentary which is falsely attributed to the seventh-century patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem, the λαβίς (spoon of communion) is connected to the vision of Isaiah and 'is a sign of Mary holding the heavenly bread'; see (ps-) Sophronios, *Liturgical Commentary* (*CPG* 7677), PG 87.3, 3985B.

> Hail, opener of the gates of paradise … Hail, door of sacred mystery … Hail, through whom paradise was opened; Hail, the key to Christ's kingdom … Hail, the gate to salvation … [43]

Even the well-known reference to Mary as the closed gate of God,[44] through which only he can pass (Ezek 44:2–3), may be said to have eucharistic connotations, if one relates it to the 'holy gate' of the Byzantine sanctuary.[45] Through that passage the priest brings forth the body of Christ to be offered to the faithful, as he was once offered to the world through the gate of Mary's body. Although the untrodden gate is a type of Mary's virginity,[46] it also evokes the prohibition for ordinary lay people to enter the sanctuary, where only the clergy and the Byzantine emperor were allowed.[47] The eucharistic connotations of Mary/the gate would be emphasised in the visual context of the Divine Liturgy by the alignment of the sanctuary door with the Theotokos in the apse (Figure 4.5), and by the usual decoration of the door panels with the Annunciation, the historical moment when Christ entered the human world through Mary.[48] In addition, the type of the closed gate is often 'reversed' in Byzantine hymns and homilies by describing the Virgin as the one who reopened the closed gate of paradise.[49] Ultimately this can also be read eucharistically, as an allusion to salvation made available through Mary/the sanctuary door that leads to the heavenly Holy of Holies, where the faithful will enjoy the banquet of the Bridegroom.[50]

All of the above Old Testament prefigurations of the Theotokos made the mystery of the incarnation more understandable to the congregation with the help of familiar imagery, which evoked containers of holiness and privileged passageways. In the Late Byzantine period, such Marian typologies were at times visualised in church wall-paintings, often with a

43 *Akathistos* 7.9; 15.7/15–16; 19.7. Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin*, 8–9, 12–13, 16–17.

44 Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 29 (θύρα), 67–8 (πύλη).

45 Taft, *Through their own Eyes*, 150–1.

46 Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 90. Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 7 (ἀνοικτήριον, ἀνοίξασα), 20 (εἴσοδος), 35 (κλείς).

47 Taft, *Through their own Eyes*, 108–9.

48 Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 180.

49 Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 91–2.

50 For the identification of the sanctuary with the heavenly Holy of Holies and its eschatological reference, see Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 53–6; Taft, *Through their own Eyes*, 148–54. On the icon screen, see N. Constas, 'Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon Screen', in S. Gerstel (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006), 163–83, esp. 173–5, 182–3. For the connection of the Eucharist to an eschatological banquet see also J. Danielou, *Bible and the Liturgy* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1956), 152–4, 217. For Mary as the closed or open gate see also R. Hillier, 'Joseph the Hymnographer and Mary the Gate', *JTS* 36:2 (1985): 311–20, and Olkinuora's chapter in this volume.

medallion of Mary marking the relevant objects (for example, the jar of manna or the gate), in order to 'seal' their typological identity.[51] Such visual statements reinforced the familiarity of the viewers with the perception of the Virgin as container and provider of Christ's sacrificial body.

> Hail, for you are the seat of the king; Hail, for you bear him who bears all … [52]

Turning to other Marian symbols that are more loosely connected to biblical sources, throne imagery stands out: the Theotokos was constantly hailed in Byzantine hymns and homilies as 'the throne of God'.[53] This reference could implicitly identify her with the altar of Christian churches, which Germanos of Constantinople describes as 'the throne of God on which the one lifted up by cherubim rested after having been embodied'.[54] These exact words can also be applied to the Theotokos holding Christ, who rests on her after assuming human nature through her body.

> The shepherds … behold him as a lamb without spot, pastured in Mary's womb, and they cried in praise of her: Hail, mother of the lamb and the shepherd … [55]

Eucharistic connotations can also be inferred when Mary is hailed as the ewe or heifer who gives birth to the sacrificial lamb or calf.[56] The Old Testament contains a number of references to the sacrifice of a lamb, ram or calf, which in Christian exegesis were interpreted as prefigurations of Christ as the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29), sacrificed on the cross and on the eucharistic altar to wash away the sins of the world.[57] So when the Theotokos is hailed as the ewe and heifer, she is presented as the mother and provider of both the historical and eucharistic sacrificial lamb and calf, the Logos incarnate. In the Byzantine rite, the central part of the eucharistic loaf, called 'the Lamb', is stamped with Jesus' name and is cut out by the priest in order to be consecrated as the body of Christ.[58] In the context of eucharistic theology, this practice suggests that the whole loaf represents

[51] P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djamii*, 3 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), vol. 1, 223–37; T. Papamastorakis, 'Η ένταξη των προεικονίσεων της Θεοτόκου και της Ύψωσης του Σταυρού σε ένα ιδιότυπο εικονογραφικό κύκλο στον Άγιο Γεώργιο Βιάννου Κρήτης', *DChAE* 14 (1987/8): 15–28 (esp. 118–19, nn. 16, 26, 28, 32, 35–8).

[52] *Akathistos* 1.12–13. Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin*, 4–5.

[53] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 28 (θρόνος), 31 (καθέδρα).

[54] Germanos, *Ecclesiastical History* 4, trans. Meyendorff, *Germanus*, 58.

[55] *Akathistos* 7.1–6; Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin*, 8–9.

[56] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 4 (ἀμνάς), 16 (δάμαλις); Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 194–208.

[57] E.g. Gen 4:4; 18:7–8; 22:13; Ex 12; Lk 15:23. For the eucharistic significance of these episodes, see Danielou, *Bible and the Liturgy*, 143, 162–76. Underwood, *Karije*, vol. 1, 117.

[58] Galavaris, *Bread*, 63–72 (attested from the Middle Byzantine period onwards).

Mary giving birth to Christ, as Byzantine commentators on the Eucharist indeed infer.[59] Therefore, in the ritual of the Eucharist, Mary is perceived as the ewe bearing the sacrificial Lamb. The extraction of the Lamb from the Theotokos/bread is performed in the space of the prothesis (left of the main altar). Mary's relevance to that ritual was occasionally emphasised by the inclusion of Old Testament Marian prefigurations and scenes from her life on the walls of the prothesis.[60]

> Hail, through whom the curse shall cease; Hail, recalling of fallen Adam; Hail, deliverance of the tears of Eve … Hail, through whom the creation is made new … The power of the Most High overshadowed her … and showed forth her fruitful womb as a sweet field for all who want to harvest salvation by singing thus: … Hail, vine of unwithering shoot; Hail, farm of undying fruit; Hail, you who cultivate the cultivator who loves humankind; Hail, you who sprout the planter of our life; Hail, earth that buds with the fertility of compassion; Hail, table that bears a wealth of mercy … Hail, food that succeeds the manna; Hail, minister of holy abundance; Hail, promised land; Hail, from whom flow milk and honey … Hail, tree of splendid fruit on which the faithful feed; Hail, wood of fair-shading leaves under which many shelter … Hail, life of the mystical banquet.[61]

A plethora of Marian references with strong eucharistic connotations relate the Theotokos to the production and consumption of a salvific edible or drinkable substance: she may be generically referred to as sprouting forth or cultivating such a life-giving substance; she may be described as the land, field or plant that produces such holy food or drink of immortality; or she may be identified more specifically with a tree that provides fruit, with earth that offers wheat or grapes, with wheat that gives forth bread or with the vine that produces grapes and ultimately wine.[62] At other times she may herself *be* the fruit or other edible (including dough or bread), which emphasises

[59] Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 93, n. 201.

[60] B. Todić and M. Čanak-Medić, *The Dečani Monastery* (Belgrade: Mnemosyne, 2013), 364–5.

[61] *Akathistos* 1.7–9; 4; 5.6–9; 11.14–17; 13.10–11, 21.17. Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin*, 4–7, 10–13, 16–17.

[62] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 4 (ἄμπελος, ἀμπελών, ἀναβλαστήσασα), 6 (ἀνθήσασα), 9–10 (ἄρουρα, ἀρτοποιήσασα), 13 (βλαστήσασα), 15 (γεωργήσασα, γῆ), 16 (δένδρον), (καρπογονοῦσα, καρποφορήσασα), 35 (κῆπος), 36–7 (κλῆμα), 39 (κτῆμα), 45 (μηλέα), 50–1 (ξύλον), 69 (ῥίζα), 85–6 (χώρα). Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 82–4, 277–9; Cunningham, 'Nourishment'; Cant 7:3 ('your belly is a sheaf of wheat', θημωνία σίτου), was also applied to Mary. Consider two authors who combine this with many more eucharistic references: *CPG* 8119, ascribed to John of Damascus but attributed by scholars to Theodore the Stoudite, PG 96, 693A–D; (ps-) Epiphanios, *Homily 5 in Praise of the Virgin* (*CPG* 3771, BHG 1143), PG 43, 492D, 493B, 496A/D; on the probable later date (sixth to eighth century) of this homily, see R. Caro, *La Homiletica Mariana griega en el siglo V* (Dayton, OH: University of Dayton, 1971), vol. 2, 578–91.

Mary's close relationship with Christ through their common bodily substance.[63] Regardless of how generic or specific such references might be, her presentation as the provider of ingestible matter that brings salvation would have had eucharistic connotations for a Byzantine audience. After all, the Eucharist was not only the primary mystery of the Church that involved food consumption; it was also the most important one, promising union with God, spiritual healing and salvation.[64] As the true fruit of the Tree of life, Christ's eucharistic body would reverse the damage done by the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and reopen the gates of Paradise for exiled humankind, so that his followers could be reunited with God.[65] As the new Eve, Mary was the provider of that fruit, reversing through her virtue and obedience the damage done by the sinfulness and disobedience of the first Eve.[66] In the words of Ephrem the Syrian, 'Mary gave us the refreshing bread, in place of the fatiguing bread Eve had procured for us.'[67]

Eucharistic references to the Theotokos as provider of holy food are particularly evocative of the sensorial experience of the Eucharist by the faithful, while they also make a profound reference to the theology of the mystery, bringing together the entire trajectory of human salvation: from the fateful consumption of the forbidden fruit to the incarnation of the Logos as the fruit of Mary's womb (Lk 1:42); to the fruits of wheat and vine sanctified as the eucharistic body of Christ; to the joyful banquet prepared

[63] Compare Cunningham, 'Nourishment', 241. Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 10 (ἄρτος), 25 (ζύμη), 29 (θῦμα), 30 (ἱερεῖον), 32 (καρπός), 45 (μῆλον), 80 (τροφή); Mary is herself the sacrificial offering.

[64] For blessed and healing edibles that were not consecrated, nor equal to the Eucharist, see Galavaris, *Bread*, 109–65. On *panagiarion* bread, see below.

[65] Mary is often hailed as the paradise of the Tree of Life (Christ), or she is herself identified with the Tree of Life bearing the life-giving fruit/Christ; cf. Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 50–1 (ξύλον), 56–7 (παράδεισος).

[66] Byzantine literature frequently identifies Mary as the one who reverses Eve's curse and rehabilitates fallen humankind. See Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 5 (ἀνάκλησις), 6 (ἀνατρέψασα), 7 (ἀναρθώσασα, ἀνόρθωσις), 8 (ἀπαλλαγή, ἀποδώσασα), 11 (ἀφαίρεσις, ἀφανίσασα), 17 (διόρθωσις), 19 (ἔγερσις), 29 (ἰασαμένη), 43 (λύσασα, λύσις, λυτήριον, λύτρον, λύτρωσις), 44 (μαράνασα), 45 (μεταβολή), 48 (νεκρώσασα), 50 (ξηραίνουσα), 59 (παύουσα). Mary is also contrasted to Eve in specific terms that present her as the New Eve. See Fr Evgenios Iverites' chapter in this volume; M. Evangelatou, 'Botanical Exegesis in God's Creation: The Polyvalent Meaning of Plants on the Salerno Ivories', in F. Dell'Acqua, A. Cutler et al. (eds.), *The Salerno Ivories. Objects, Histories, Contexts* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2016), 149–50, n. 58; Peltomaa, *Image of the Virgin*, 128–34; N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 282–90; Kniazeff, *La mère*, 53–67.

[67] Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns for the Unleavened Bread* 6–7, CSCO 249, 11; cited in C. McNelly Kearns, *The Virgin Mary, Monotheism and Sacrifice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 220.

by the Lord in heaven, where at the end of time the just will celebrate their salvation, achieved through the sacrifice of Christ and the mediation of his mother.[68] References to Mary as paradise not only allude to her eucharistic role as the garden which provides the fruit of the Tree of Life,[69] but they also evoke the timefulness that she shares with the Eucharist, since both of them encapsulate in theological and typological terms the past, present and future of human salvation.[70]

In the context of eucharistic food imagery related to Mary, one should also consider the exegetical tradition of Proverbs 9:1–5, in which Wisdom builds herself a house, sacrifices animals, mixes wine and water in her krater, and invites the people to join her banquet and share her bread and wine. Byzantine textual and visual interpretations of this passage identified Christ as Wisdom, Mary as his house, table and vessels, and the Eucharist as the banquet.[71]

In addition to the eucharistic connotations of the above Marian types and metaphors, there are specific episodes in Mary's life, widely known in Byzantine tradition, that also present her as provider of Christ's eucharistic body. Such references are prominent in the apocryphal *Protevangelium of James* (dated to the middle or late second century AD), which was widely popular and recognised as a venerable source in Byzantium.[72] According to this text, when Mary was an infant, her mother turned the baby's room into a sanctuary (*agiasma*) and confined her in that space in order to preserve

[68] For this all-encompassing scope of the Eucharist, see Taft, *Through their own Eyes*, 137–43; Danielou, *Bible and the Liturgy*, 152–8; R. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 1992), 69.

[69] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 20 (Ἐδέμ), 56–7 (παράδεισος). See Evangelatou, 'Botanical exegesis', 147, n. 48, for literature on Christ as the Tree of Life or its fruit.

[70] 'Timeful' captures better than 'timeless' or 'eternal' the medieval (Catholic and Eastern Orthodox) Christian belief according to which different moments in the history of human salvation that prefigure, fulfil or supplant one another can be synchronically encapsulated in rituals like the Eucharist, or in figures like Mary/New Eve/Heavenly Bride. I owe the term 'timeful' to Diana Rose (PhD graduate, Visual Studies, University of California Santa Cruz). References to timefulness in medieval Christian ritual and visual production are discussed in more detail in M. Evangelatou, 'Hierochronotopy: Stepping into Timeful Space through Bonanno's Twelfth-Century Door for the Pisa Cathedral' (forthcoming). For a discussion of Mary in terms that emphasise what I call her 'timefulness' see also Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 34, and Olkinuora's chapter in this volume.

[71] Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 94–5; Kniazeff, *La mère*, 157–69; Danielou, *Bible and the Liturgy*, 152–8; Todić and Čanak-Medić, *Dečani*, 358–9, n. 89; D. Pallas, 'Ο Χριστός ως η Θεία Σοφία. Η εικονογραφική περιπέτεια μιας θεολογικής έννοιας', *DChAE* 15 (1989–90): 119–44, esp. 18–29, 136–7.

[72] L. Vuong, *Gender and Purity in the Protevangelium of James* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 6–13 (overview of textual tradition and various editions). See also Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 32, n. 71. For Greek text and French translation, see E. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961).

her purity until she was dedicated to the Temple of God in Jerusalem at 3 years of age. Once in the Temple, Mary lived in the Holy of Holies (*thysiasterion, agiasma*) and was fed with heavenly food brought to her by an angel.[73] In this narrative it is clear that Mary was being prepared to become the vessel of God, so she was transferred from the domestic sanctuary of her parents' house to the most Holy of Holies in the Temple, to be raised among the priests, under the guardianship of the high priest Zachariah himself. This upbringing designated Mary as the future living Temple and sanctuary of God, when she would receive, house and serve Christ in and through her very own body.[74] The heavenly nourishment that, according to the *Protevangelium,* was brought to the child Mary by an angel was considered a prefiguration of both the incarnation and the Eucharist.[75] In the words of Andrew of Crete, 'Your belly became a holy table, having the heavenly bread, and whoever eats from it does not die, as said the nurturer of all, Oh God-bearer.'[76] This theotokion evokes all three aspects of Mary's relation with the heavenly bread: she eats it from the angel's hand (implied by reference to 'your belly', *koilia*); she births it in Christ (she is *Theogenetor*, 'God-bearer'); and she offers it for the salvation of the faithful on the holy altar of the church (she is *hagia trapeza*, 'holy table').

Byzantine textual and visual records amply attest that the above episodes from Mary's childhood were given eucharistic connotations. Homilies dedicated to the *Eisodia*, or the Entrance of Mary to the Temple, regularly greet her as God's true sanctuary and vessel. She is prefigured by the Holy of Holies and its sacred implements, which were only shadows of her grace. Homilists also note her privileged access to the Holy of Holies and describe her in eucharistic terms.[77] The iconography of the *Eisodia*

73 *Protevangelium* 6–8, ed. de Strycker, *Protévangile*, 90–102.

74 H. Maguire, 'Abaton and Oikonomia: St Neophytos and the Iconography of the Presentation of the Virgin', in N. P. Ševčenko and C. Moss (eds.), *Medieval Cyprus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 95–6. See also Olkinuora's chapter in this volume.

75 See homilies on Mary's Entrance by the following authors: Germanos of Constantinople, PG 98, 316C; George of Nikomedia, Homily 7, PG 100, 1448AB; Peter of Argos in E. Toniolo (ed.), 'Alcune omelie mariane dei sec. x–xiv: Pietro d'Argo, Niceta Paflagone, Michele Psellos e Ninfo Ieromonaco', *Marianum* 33 (1971): 366 (lines 343–6); Theophylact of Ohrid, PG 126, 141C. See also Maguire, 'Abaton and Oikonomia', 102.

76 See n. 1.

77 Compare the homilies on the Entrance by Germanos of Constantinople (*CPG* 8007–8), PG 98, 293A, C, 301B, 304A, 305B–C, 308C, 309C, 312C; Tarasios, PG 98, 1484A–B, 1489A–C, 1492A–B, 1496B; George of Nikomedia, PG 100, 1417, 1424–5, 1436B, 1437C; Leo VI, PG 107, 16A, 17–20; T. Antonopoulou (ed.), *Leonis VI Sapientis Imperatoris Byzantini Homiliae* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), *Homily 20, On the Entrance of the Virgin into the Temple*, 267–76; Peter of Argos and Michael Psellos in Toniolo (ed.), 'Alcune omelie', 344–72, 386–94; cf. James of Kokkinobaphos, PG 127, 608C–612A, 617D–620A.

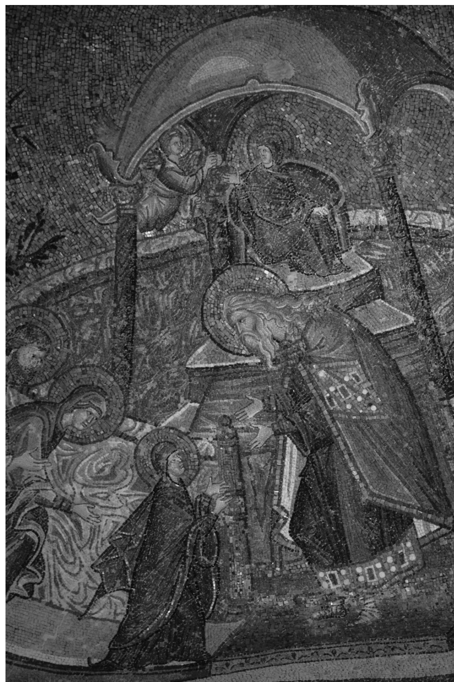

Figure 4.3 The Virgin's Entrance into the Temple (*Eisodia*); the Virgin fed by an angel in the Holy of Holies. Church of the Chora Monastery, fourteenth century, Constantinople (photo: Rossitza Schroeder).

frequently includes the episode of Mary's miraculous feeding: the child appears enthroned under a ciborium inside the Holy of Holies, while the angel offers her not just unspecified food (as in the *Protevangelium*) but specifically a circular loaf of bread, similar to a eucharistic loaf (Figure 4.3).[78] The ciborium is traditionally used in Byzantine images above a Christian altar table holding the Eucharist, including cases in which Christ or a priest are seen handling a circular loaf of bread (Figures 4.1, 4.13–14, 4.16).[79] As Henry Maguire has observed, the Holy of Holies in many representations of the *Eisodia* has other prominent elements that allude to the sanctuary of Byzantine churches: the altar table, the bipartite sanctuary door ('holy gate') and a parapet that corresponds to the lower part of the templon screen.[80] All of these visual similarities would have resonated in the eyes of

[78] Also mentioned by M. J. Milliner, 'The Virgin of the Passion: Development, Dissemination, and Afterlife of a Byzantine Icon Type' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2011), 119.

[79] Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, figs. 3, 13–14, 41–2, 55, 72–4, 86. See also Olkinuora's chapter in this volume.

[80] H. Maguire, 'Abaton and Oikonomia', 100–1.

Figure 4.4 Christ's Presentation to the Temple (*Hypapante*). Main church of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas, eleventh century, Boeotia, Greece (photo: Vasilis Marinis).

the Byzantines, evoking the idea of Mary as the living altar of the church sanctuary, receiving the heavenly bread in order to provide it to the faithful. Therefore, it is not surprising that the *Eisodia* was frequently represented in the sanctuary of Byzantine churches, especially of the late period.[81] Even outside the space of the sanctuary, the scene might still showcase its eucharistic connotations through its relation to other images in the church.[82]

Another major narrative from Mary's life that seems to present her as provider of a holy sacrifice with eucharistic connotations is Christ's Presentation to the Temple, also known as the *Hypapante* ('Meeting') (Figure 4.4). In the Lucan narrative, Christ's Passion is foretold by Symeon as a sacrifice which his mother will also have to suffer (Lk 2:35), and the idea is further elaborated with eucharistic connotations in Byzantine literature: several authors place emphasis on the sacrificial significance of the episode,[83] and at times hail Mary in terms that explicitly present her as container and provider of Christ's eucharistic body.[84] This idea is further emphasised by

[81] Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 69–70.

[82] E.g. in the Chora Monastery (see my n. 137).

[83] Milliner, 'Virgin of the Passion', 120–3. Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', 185, n. 116.

[84] A. Weyl Carr, 'The Presentation of an Icon at Mount Sinai', *DChAE* 17 (1993–4): 239–48, esp. 244–7. See also early homilies on the Hypapante, as listed by Pauline Allen in her 'The Greek Homiletic Tradition of the Feast of the Hypapante: The Place of Sophronios of

visual depictions of the Hypapante, which traditionally take place before an altar table surmounted by a ciborium.[85] The latter alludes to the sanctuary of Byzantine churches, in which Christ is presented during the Eucharist, and in which Mary is symbolically present as the provider of his sacrificial body.

In conclusion, Mary's Eucharistic identity was continuously explored in Byzantine textual sources and relevant visual creations. It was also vividly evoked through her representation in the apse, a main focal point for the gaze of the faithful when they entered the church and attended the mysteries.[86] It is time to discuss this visual material in more detail.[87]

The Theotokos and the Eucharist: The Visual Evidence in the Apse

After the end of Iconoclasm in the ninth century, the Virgin became the figure most commonly depicted in the sanctuary apse of Byzantine churches, either with or without Christ in her arms. Scholars have named a number of reasons for this iconographic preference,[88] which include the following: (1) the growth of Mary's cult after the victory of the Iconophiles, due to her power as intercessor and her role in the incarnation, made her figure a fitting choice for the apse, one of the focal points of church architecture; (2) the position of the apse conch between the level of the dome and that of the floor reflected Mary's role as the bridge between heaven and earth; (3) the Virgin's place in the heavenly hierarchy immediately below God was analogous to the place of the apse in the architectural hierarchy of the church, right below the dome; (4) the perception of the sanctuary as God's throne was analogous to the perception of the Theotokos as Christ's

Jerusalem', in K. Belke, E. Kislinger, A. Külzer and M. A. Stassinopoulou (eds.), *Byzantina Mediterranea: Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2007), 3–8. In his sixth homily on the Virgin, James of Kokkinobaphos uses eucharistic terms in reference to Mary delivering the purple thread to Symeon in the Temple of Jerusalem, and treats the event as a prefiguration of the Hypapante, when Mary presents Christ to the same Symeon; see M. Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power: Clothing Symbolism, Human Salvation, and Female Identity in the Illustrated Homilies by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos', *DOP* 68 (2014): 284–6, figs. 225–6.

[85] Maguire, 'Abaton and Oiknomia', 101. H. Maguire, 'The Iconography of Symeon with the Christ Child in Byzantine Art', *DOP* 34–5 (1980–1): 261–9.

[86] Compare Taft, *Byzantine Rite*, 70–1; Todić and Čanak-Medić, *Dečani*, 242, 362.

[87] Beyond the space of the church, Mary was also presented as provider of the Eucharist in luxury codices like the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, addressed to a limited audience; see Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', esp. 271–2, 284–6.

[88] Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 57–83.

throne, which is a formula often used in Byzantine literature. I propose that in addition to these important factors, the idea of Mary as bearer and provider of Christ's eucharistic body should be considered.

As we have seen, the Theotokos was constantly presented as provider of the Eucharist in liturgical texts that were used in Byzantine churches throughout the empire. Visual narratives from Mary's life, especially her own and Christ's Presentation to the Temple, would also reinforce this perception of Mary as the one through whom Christ and the Eucharist were made available to his people. The Theotokos was also invoked in the prayers of the Divine Liturgy as Mother of God and intercessor of the congregation,[89] roles that could be seen to highlight her identity as provider of the Eucharist. Was the iconography of Mary in the apse also meant to support such a eucharistic reading? The following visual material will suggest that indeed on several occasions the planners and painters responsible for the creation of Byzantine sanctuaries used specific visual elements that would prompt the viewers to identify the Theotokos as the provider of Christ's eucharistic body.[90] Yet it should be noted that even without any special iconographic dispensations, lay viewers could still be inclined towards a eucharistic interpretation, given the visual and ritual context of Mary in the apse: they would see the priest emerge from the sanctuary door with the Eucharist in his hands, aligned with the image of Mary with Christ in her hands (Figure 4.5). When depicted not with her Son, but alone and with her hands raised in prayer, she could still appear as the one who had provided Christ's eucharistic body, the fruit of life brought out of the sanctuary as if out of her own womb (Figures 4.1, 4.6). In that role she was not only the Theotokos and New Eve, but also the Mother Church feeding her children with the food of everlasting life.[91] The complete decoration of the sanctuary,

89 F. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 314, 326, 330–1, 342, 344.

90 See also aspects of Mary's attire in apse depictions, which scholars have related to episcopal garments: M. Tomić Djurić, 'To Picture and to Perform. The Image of the Eucharistic Liturgy at Markov Manastir', *Zograf* 38 (2014): 137–8; A. Lidov, 'The Priesthood of the Virgin: An Image-Paradigm of Byzantine Iconography', in his *Hierotopy: Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Culture* (Moscow: Theoria, 2009), 223–56, English summary, 332–3.

91 On Mary as the Church/Bride of Christ, see Danielou, *Bible and the Liturgy*, 215–21. Kniazeff, *La mère*, 66–7, 70, 91, 151, 184–5, 190–1. H. Papastavrou, 'L'idée de l'Ecclesia et la scène de l'Annonciation. Quelques aspects', *DchAE* 21 (2000): 227–40, and Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art Byzantin et Occidental du XIe au XVe siècle: L'Annonciation* (Venice: Institut hellénique d'études byzantines et post-byzantines de Venise, 2007), 177–355. The Church is often described as the Bride of Christ; see Pallas, 'Sophia', 129–30. The same term is regularly applied to Mary; see Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 49–50 (νύμφη); Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', 275, n. 52.

which was visible in its entirety only to the officiating clergy, would further support Mary's eucharistic significance. For example, she was aligned not only with the actual altar but also with the painted one, if the apse included a representation of the Communion of the apostles below her (from the eleventh century onward, Figures 4.1, 4.6, 4.10, 4.16, 4.20), and/or the co-celebrating hierarchs converging towards an altar (from the twelfth century onward, Figures 4.2, 4.5).[92] Thus she could be seen holding and therefore also offering her son (or as having already offered him, when the Child is not in her hands), in juxtaposition with Christ offering his own body in the Communion scene, or with Christ literally depicted as the eucharistic sacrifice in the scene known as the *Melismos*, towards which the co-celebrating hierarchs often converged (Figures 4.2).[93] Frequently Mary was flanked by angels bowing towards her, in a pose echoed by the apostles approaching Christ to receive communion, or by the co-celebrating hierarchs bowing towards and venerating the actual altar or a painted one between them (Figures 4.2, 4.5, 4.19–20).[94] Their actions were mirrored by those of the priests and deacons officiating in the sanctuary before them. When angels flanked the altar next to the officiating Christ at the Communion of the Apostles, or at the *Melismos*, they would echo the angels flanking and serving Mary, the living altar of God (Figure 4.20).[95] In any case, angels were repeatedly mentioned as co-celebrating in heaven and on earth during the Divine Liturgy, serving both at the altar of God and at the church altar next to the clergy;[96] so when they were seen flanking the Theotokos in the apse, one possible implication could be that they were serving at the living altar of God, namely, Mary. In addition, the Ascension of Christ was regularly depicted in the sanctuary, either on the vault or the eastern wall above the apse (Figures 4.5–6, 4.9, 4.11).[97] Christ ascending in a circular or oval body halo was aligned with the Theotokos in the apse and the altar table beneath her. This arrangement would emphasise the perception of Mary as the one through whom the heavenly bread was made available to the

[92] For the development of these scenes, see Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 125–59; Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 21–67.

[93] On the *Melismos,* see Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 40–4.

[94] Ibid., pl. I, V, figs. 25, 31, 36, 51.

[95] Ibid., figs. 31, 36, 51.

[96] Brightman, *Liturgies*, 312; Taft, *Byzantine Rite*, 37, 69. For angels performing the Great Entrance in Late Byzantine painting, see T. Papamastorakis, *Ο διάκοσμος του τρούλου των ναών της παλαιολόγειας περιόδου στη Βαλκανική χερσόνησο και την Κύπρο* (Athens: Archaiologike Etaireia, 2001), 135–65. Angels dressed as deacons appear in the Communion of the Apostles (from the eleventh century) or flanking the altar table of the co-celebrating hierarchs (from the twelfth c.): Tomić Djurić, 'Markov Manastir', 134–7.

[97] Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα*, 195–201.

Figure 4.5 East part of the Church of St George, late twelfth century, Kurbinovo, North Macedonia. The original templon screen has been replaced with a new one of similar dimensions. The altar table with Mary above it, in the sanctuary apse, is visible through the templon door. The Annunciation flanks the apse and the Ascension of Christ is above it (photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY).

faithful so that they could achieve *theosis* (deification) and at the end of time join Christ in heaven.[98] In all of these possible contexts, the Theotokos

[98] Ibid. Mantas argues that one of the reasons for the depiction of the Ascension in the sanctuary is its eschatological significance and its reference to the *theosis* that was made possible through the Incarnation of the Logos in Christ and his ascent to heaven. To this one should

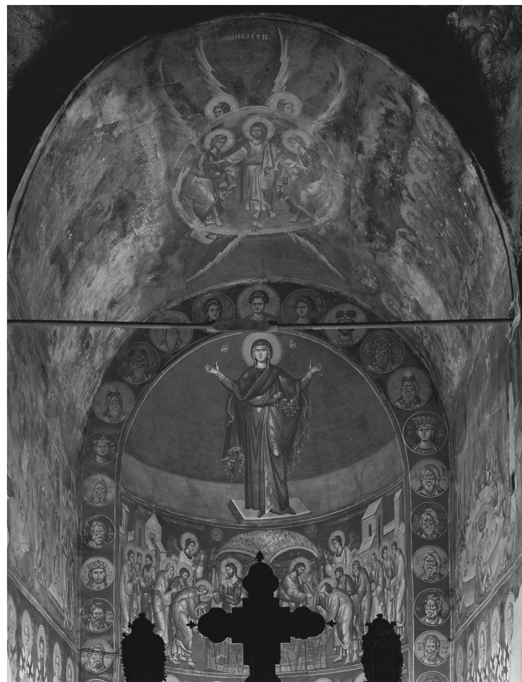

Figure 4.6 Sanctuary decoration, with the Ascension of Christ in the vault above Mary *orans* and the Communion of the Apostles in the apse (visible behind the cross of the templon screen). Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (today Church of St Clement of Ohrid), late thirteenth century, Ohrid, North Macedonia (photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY).

in the apse dominated the axis that was aligned with the church altar, around which both animate and inanimate actors celebrated the Eucharist in dialogue with each other. Depending on the height of the apse and the templon screen, and the size of the sanctuary doors, the laity could also have visual access to some of those intervisual connections (for example, between the Theotokos in the conch and the Communion of the Apostles below, Figures 4.6, 4.11).[99] In the final part of this chapter, I will discuss cases in which specific visual elements make Mary's eucharistic significance even more explicit.

add the centrality of *theosis* in the theology and experience of the Eucharist, for which see N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), esp. 190–1, 222, 252–3, 255; S. Thomas, *Deification in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Biblical Perspective* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 28, 41–2.

[99] For the visibility of the apse conch and the altar table through the templon screen see S. Gerstel, 'An Alternate View of the Late Byzantine Sanctuary Screen', in *Thresholds of the Sacred,* 136, figs. 1–4, 8.

The eleventh-century church of the Panagia Chalkeon in Thessalonike is a case worth considering. The Virgin is represented in the apse conch standing with arms outstretched in prayer, venerated by two bowing angels. The inscription around this composition, on the arch of the apse, spells out its eucharistic significance: 'Beholding the sanctuary of the Lord's altar, stand trembling, O human … For within, Christ is sacrificed daily and the powers of the incorporeal angels, celebrating, circle around it in fear.'[100] The inscription clearly states that the angels celebrate the Eucharist around the altar, but the image shows them standing in veneration around the Virgin. In combination, the visual and epigraphic evidence suggests that she is the altar upon which the angels celebrate the Eucharist. A rare iconographic detail might further corroborate this hypothesis: the hand of God appears blessing the Virgin, right above her.[101] This might be a reference to the divine power that descends upon the altar when the Holy Spirit transubstantiates bread and wine into Christ's flesh and blood. It also reminds the viewers that the same power descended upon the Virgin during the Annunciation, to transform her flesh and blood into Christ's body.

Another interesting case appears in the sanctuary of the Enkleistra (Hermitage) of St Neophytos of Paphos, dated to 1183 (Figures 4.7–9). Due to lack of space, the iconographic programme of this sanctuary is compressed, so that the figure of the Virgin *orans* appears among the co-celebrant hierarchs who are usually depicted below Mary, converging at the painted or actual altar of the church.[102] In other words, the visual depiction of a liturgical table has been embodied here by the image of the archetypal altar, the Virgin, around whom the hierarchs celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist. In addition, owing to the peculiar shape of the apse and in order to depict Mary aligned with the actual altar table right below her, the composition is not symmetrical: there is only one hierarch to the left and three on the right, flanking the Theotokos between them.[103] This unusual asymmetry emphasises the connection between the Theotokos and the altar below. The same asymmetry is followed in the Ascension scene above, with six apostles tightly compressed to the left, while an angel and the other six apostles are spread out to the right. This allows Mary and Christ in the narrative episode of the Ascension to align with the Virgin *orans* and the altar table in

100 Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 81–2, figs. 1, 3.

101 Ibid., 82.

102 C. Mango and E. Hawkins, 'The Hermitage of St. Neophytos and its Wall Paintings', *DOP* 20 (1966): 166–7, figs. 60, 69.

103 Mango and Hawkings, 'Hermitage', 166–7, fig. 69.

the sacrificial composition below.[104] The full significance of this alignment is revealed by the scrolls of the four hierarchs around Mary, which are inscribed with excerpts from the beginning of the prayer of the prothesis (when the eucharistic bread and wine are prepared before being taken to the altar table for the transubstantiation), according to the Liturgy of St Basil: 'God, our God, who send forth the heavenly bread, our Lord [Jesus Christ] blessing and hallowing us; yourself bless this oblation, too, and receive it to your heavenly altar.'[105] This heavenly bread is Christ enthroned inside a circular body halo (similar in shape to a eucharistic loaf), in the image of the Ascension. The double appearance of the Theotokos, both under Christ in the narrative of the Ascension and right below again, aligned with the altar, visualises the offering of the heavenly bread through the altar of Mary's body. It should be noted that the idea of the Theotokos as provider of the Eucharist is prominent in the writings of St Neophytos, patron of the above wall-paintings.[106] In his homilies on various feast days, he describes Mary in most of the eucharistic terms discussed above; but he also comes up with more unique imagery, such as 'pyramid, holding in her bosom the wheat of life'[107] and 'all-vigorous and unblemished leaven, through which like "three measures [of flour]" all our old dough was renewed'.[108] Neophytos has bequeathed us some of the most vivid descriptions of Mary as provider of eucharistic nourishment in the surviving Byzantine literature. It is no surprise that the wall-paintings he commissioned reflect the same veneration towards Mary, the living altar of God.

The eleventh-century wall-paintings in the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia in Ohrid present Mary in even clearer eucharistic terms (Figures 4.10–15).[109] The Virgin is seated on a throne, holding an oval medallion which appears as a body halo (mandorla) with the Christ Child enthroned in the centre. This image has visual analogies with the figure of Christ holding the round loaf of the eucharistic bread in the scene of the Communion of the Apostles right below (see details in Figures 4.12–13). The body presented by the

[104] Mango and Hawkings, 'Hermitage', 164, figs. 60–1, attribute the asymmetry of the Ascension to the window on Christ's left, but the entire span and arrangement of the composition suggests the alignment with Mary and the altar below was the decisive factor. The images included in the article by Mango and Hawkings give a better sense of the arrangement of the scenes in space and include the altar table below Mary.

[105] Mango and Hawkings, 'Hermitage', 67.

[106] See Weyl Carr, 'Presentation', 244–7, for Neophytos' homily on the Hypapante. His homily on the Annunciation has many eucharistic references. In his homily to the Dormition, Mary herself celebrates her role as provider of the bread of life. See E. Toniolo, 'Omelie e Catechesi mariane inedite di Neofito il Recluso (1134–1220 c.)', *Marianum* 36 (1974): 240–4, 292, 304–6.

[107] Toniolo, 'Omelie e Catechesi', 304, 17.

[108] Ibid., 300, 18–20. Compare Mt 13:33, Lk. 13:20–1.

[109] Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 83–4.

Figure 4.7 Mary *orans* with one co-celebrating hierarch on the left. Sanctuary apse in the Enkleistra of St Neophytos, late twelfth century, Paphos, Cyprus (photo: Vasilis Marinis).

Figure 4.8 Mary *orans* (partly visible on the left) with three co-celebrating hierarchs on the right. Sanctuary apse in the Enkleistra of St Neophytos, late twelfth century, Paphos, Cyprus (photo: Vasilis Marinis).

Figure 4.9 Christ's Ascension above and Mary *orans* (partly visible behind the oil lamp) with co-celebrating hierarchs below. Sanctuary apse in the Enkleistra of St Neophytos, late twelfth century, Paphos, Cyprus (photo: Vasilis Marinis).

Virgin, as if on a circular paten that is turned slightly sideways to appear oval, is the same body, the circular loaf of bread, offered in the Communion of the Apostles, the archetype of the Eucharist performed below this image by the clergy. The movement of the apostles towards Christ's altar is echoed in the movement of the angels that appear on the side walls of the apse, flanking the enthroned Mary as the living altar of God (Figure 4.15). The altar table in front of Christ holds only a jug (not a chalice) containing wine, and bears no paten (Figure 4.13); this omission places emphasis on the circular loaf of bread that Jesus embraces in front of his body, further highlighting the identification between himself and the bread of the Eucharist, as well as between that loaf and the Child in the oval medallion embraced by Mary above. The size of the Theotokos, which dominates not just the sanctuary but even the entire space of the nave, also evokes the idea of Mary as the Mother Church feeding her children (Figure 4.15).[110] Cross-references with two more scenes further emphasise the above ideas: Christ in a circular body halo at the centre of the Ascension scene, which appears

[110] Compare A. Lidov, 'Byzantine Church Decoration and the Great Schism of 1054', *Byzantion* 68.2 (1998): 381–405. Lidov interprets Mary as the Church and the medallion with Christ as a paten. He also points out the relation of the sanctuary wall-paintings to the ongoing controversy between Constantinople and Rome about the use of leavened or unleavened bread in the Eucharist. See also Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 59, n. 65.

Figure 4.10 Virgin with Christ above the Communion of the Apostles and portraits of frontal hierarchs. Sanctuary apse of the Church of St Sophia, eleventh century (and Ottoman pulpit added in the fourteenth century), Ohrid, North Macedonia (photo: DeAgostini/Getty Images). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

on the sanctuary vault above the church altar, is aligned with Mary holding her son in a medallion and with Christ holding the eucharistic loaf in the apse below the Ascension (compare Figures 4.10–11). In addition, St Basil appears celebrating the Eucharist on the north wall of the sanctuary, next to the Communion of the Apostles. Right in front of him, on the altar, lies a paten with the eucharistic circular loaf marked by a cross in its centre (Figures 4.14–15). Specific chromatic resonances between all of these scenes underline their theological interrelation: the circular paten in front of Basil is similar to the Ascension body halo and the medallion held by Mary: the white outer rim gradually turns blue towards the centre. The eucharistic loaf in Basil's paten has a warm golden hue that is similar to the clothes Christ wears as he is enthroned inside the Ascension mandorla and the medallion in Mary's hands.[111] Christ is dressed in the same golden-like chiton in the Communion of the Apostles, as he holds a eucharistic loaf of

[111] Lidov, 'Great Schism', n. 27, also observes the chromatic similarities between Basil's paten on the altar and Christ's medallion on Mary's chest.

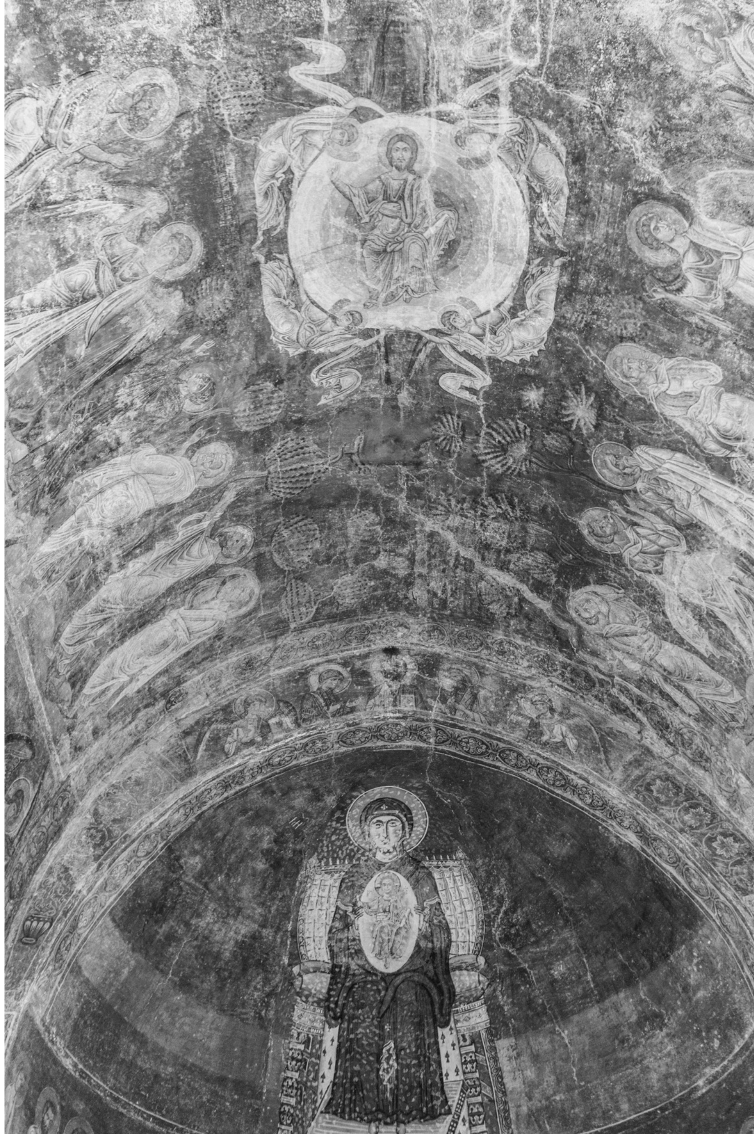

Figure 4.11 The Ascension of Christ above the enthroned Virgin and Child in the apse conch. Sanctuary of the Church of St Sophia, eleventh century, Ohrid, North Macedonia (photo: Hemis /Alamy Stock).

a similar warm hue. The implication of these chromatic and iconographic choices is that Christ's historical and eucharistic body (or loaf) are one and the same: the heavenly bread brought to earth through Mary's own historical and eucharistic body (or altar). Perhaps it is also significant that Mary's tunic is of similar deep blue colour with the altar cloth in front of Basil: she

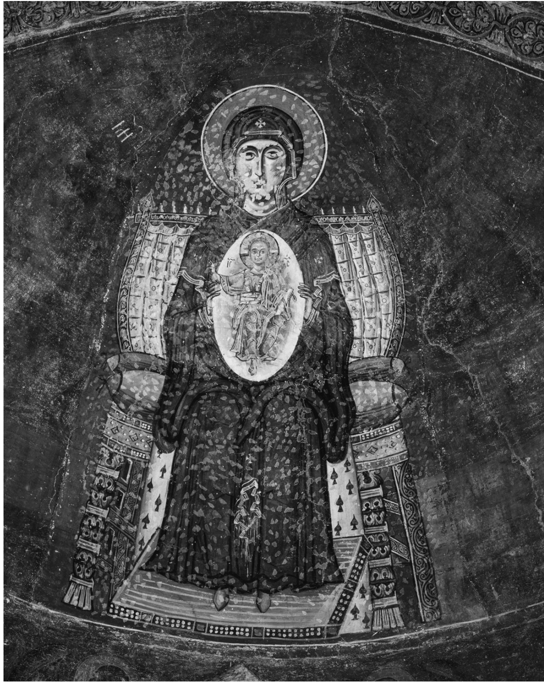

Figure 4.12 Enthroned Mary holding a medallion with Christ Emmanuel (detail of Figures 4.10–11). Apse conch, sanctuary of the Church of St Sophia, eleventh century, Ohrid, North Macedonia (photo: DeAgostini/Getty Images).

is the living altar holding Christ's sacrificial body.[112] Old Testament scenes are also depicted in this sanctuary, on the north and south walls, at the same register with the Communion of the Apostles.[113] Their eucharistic connotations can be related to the role of the Theotokos; Jacob's Ladder, depicted on the north wall, was a popular Marian type that presented the Virgin as the medium through which God came to earth so that humans can ascend to heaven.[114] The same double movement that bridges the gap between God and his people is accomplished through the Eucharist, also made available through Mary. The episode of the Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace, depicted next to the Ladder, was a common reference to Mary containing divine fire without being burnt by it, but rather

[112] Compare the assimilation of the altar cloth (ἐνδυτή) with the bosom (κόλπος) of the Theotokos in the twelfth-century liturgical commentary attributed to Sophronios of Jerusalem, PG 87.3, 3985B.

[113] Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 84.

[114] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 36 (κλῖμαξ). Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 66–7. See also Dell'Acqua's chapter in this volume.

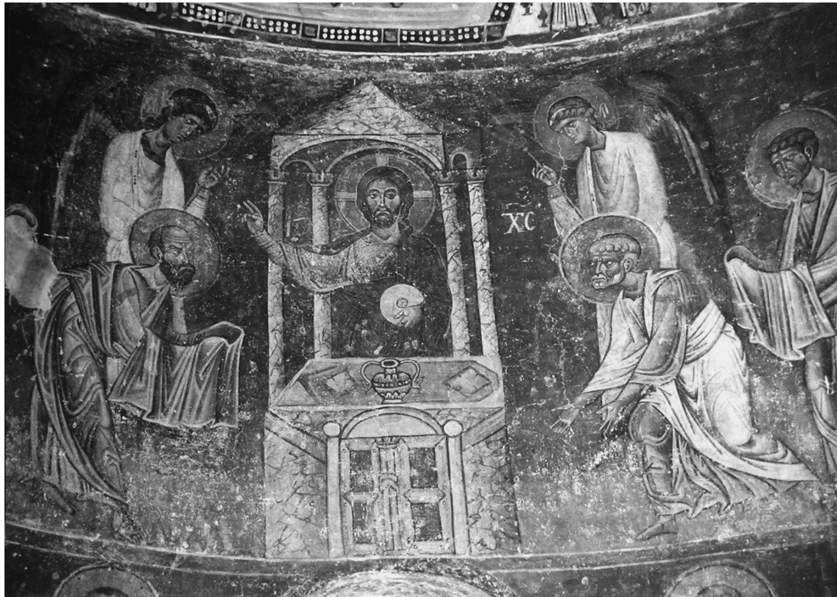

Figure 4.13 The Communion of the Apostles, with Christ, angels, Paul and Peter (detail of Figure 4.10), apse, sanctuary of the Church of St Sophia, eleventh century, Ohrid, North Macedonia. Photo in the public domain (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Frescos_from_St._Sophia_Church_in_Ohrid_035.JPG).

purifying the world through it (as God's presence in the eucharistic bread and wine also does).[115] On the south wall of the sanctuary, the Hospitality and Sacrifice of Abraham could be seen to prefigure Mary as the heifer or ewe providing Christ as the eucharistic calf (offered at the Hospitality) or lamb (sacrificed instead of Isaac).[116]

A Marian iconographic type that often appears in apse decoration and could have strong eucharistic connotations is the Theotokos with her hands outstretched in prayer and a medallion of Christ Emmanuel hovering before her chest (Figures 4.16, 4.19). The image is supposed to copy one of the most miraculous icons in the Church of the Blachernai in Constantinople. For convenience I will term this iconographic type 'Blachernitissa', although the Byzantines would have used the same name for different images of Mary that were related to the Blachernai.[117] This iconography has been interpreted by scholars as a symbolic rendering of

[115] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 32 (κάμινος). Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 68–9.

[116] See above, regarding Mary as the heifer or ewe. All four Old Testament scenes make a number of eucharistic references, beyond their connection to Mary.

[117] Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 146.

Figure 4.14 St Basil of Caesarea performing the Eucharist (detail of Figure 4.15), north wall, sanctuary of the Church of St Sophia, eleventh century, Ohrid, North Macedonia. Photo in the public domain (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Frescos_from_St._Sophia_Church_in_Ohrid_055.JPG).

the Virgin's pregnancy, and therefore an emphatic reference to the incarnation.[118] It has also been seen as a visualisation of the idea of Christ as the Sun of Justice contained in the body of the woman who is wider than heaven (*platytera ton ouranon*), an appellation that was often linked with Mary in Byzantine tradition.[119] I propose that the Blachernitissa could also be seen as either the altar bearing the paten, or the paten bearing the eucharistic loaf (the last two of which are circular like Christ's medallion on Mary's body). The twelfth-century liturgical commentary attributed to Sophronios of Jerusalem identifies the altar cloth with the bosom of the Theotokos.[120] This is vividly evoked in the Blachernitissa iconography by the placement of Christ, the heavenly bread, on the folds of her maphorion, covering her bosom. Already in the eighth century, Patriarch Germanos identified the

[118] A. Weis, *Die Madonna Platytera* (Konigstein im Taunus: Verlag Karl Robert Langewiesche, 1985), esp. 20–49, 111–64.

[119] Weis, *Die Madonna*, passim; Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 62–3 (πλατυτέρα).

[120] See my n. 112.

Figure 4.15 View (above the templon screen) of the apse and sanctuary, with Mary enthroned holding Christ, the Communion of the Apostles below, and St Basil celebrating the Eucharist on the north wall to the left. Church of St Sophia, eleventh century, Ohrid, North Macedonia (photo: Ivan Drpić).

paten as the sky that contains Christ the intelligible sun.[121] Since Mary is hailed in similar heavenly terms in Byzantine literature,[122] she can also be perceived as the paten of the heavenly bread.

Another possible link between the Blachernitissa and the Eucharist is the metaphor of the seal. Bissera Pentcheva has interpreted the circular medallion of Christ in this iconographic type as a seal impression, left on Mary's body through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, in order to transfer God's divine nature upon the human matrix of the Theotokos without violating her virginity. Pentcheva thinks that this reference of the Blachernitissa to an unbreakable seal is what made this iconography especially popular for Byzantine lead seals, which safeguarded public or private documents.[123] The seal metaphor of the Blachernitissa could be particularly meaningful in the context of the sanctuary: it does not only reference the incarnation, which is reenacted in the mystery of the Eucharist, but it also alludes to the seal with the letters of Christ's name impressed upon the centre of the eucharistic loaf to distinguish 'the Lamb' that is cut out and consecrated as

[121] Germanos, *Ecclesiastical History* 38, Meyendorff (trans.), *Germanus*, 86–7.
[122] Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος*, 54 (οὐρανός).
[123] Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 147–9.

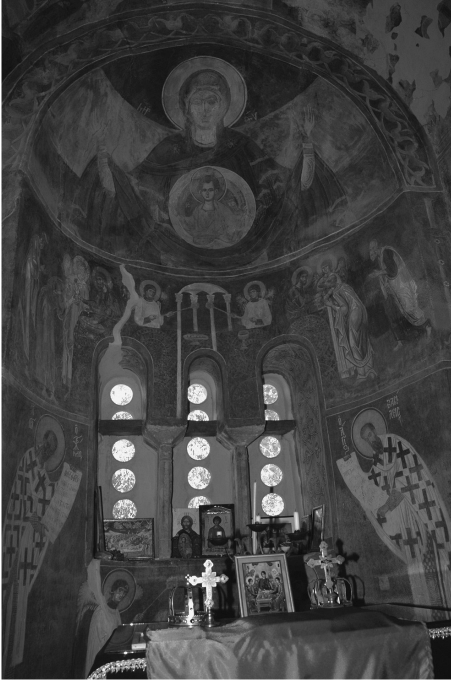

Figure 4.16 Mary Blachernitissa, Communion of the Apostles, co-celebrating hierarchs converging towards the Melismos (depicted below the window, behind the church altar). Sanctuary apse, Church of St Panteleimon, second half of the twelfth century (the Blachernitissa dates to sixteenth-century repairs and could be similar to the original painting), Gorno Nerezi, North Macedonia (photo: Ivan Drpić).

the body of Christ. Since Mary was identified with the whole loaf giving birth to the Lamb, no other iconographic type could be a better visualisation of this idea than the Blachernitissa.[124]

Yet another possible eucharistic reference of the Blachernitissa has to do with the use of leavened bread by the Byzantine Church: according to liturgical commentators, the use of leavened bread is a symbol of the incarnation itself, emphasising that Christ fully took on human nature, so that he is both perfect God and perfect man in one hypostasis.[125] In the eleventh

[124] Galavaris, *Bread*, 77–87, discusses square and round eucharistic stamps (86–7); Galavaris clarifies that Symeon of Thessalonike mentions a circular stamp divided into four parts by the cross; see Symeon, *On the Sacred Liturgy* 37, 39–40, PG 155, 265–68, in S. Hawkes-Teeples, *St. Symeon of Thessalonika. The Liturgical Commentaries* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2011), 188–91; the English translation of the τετραμερές ('four-part', of the stamp/Lamb) as four-sided (τετράπλευρον) bread is incorrect. The eucharistic loaf was circular.

[125] Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 58.

century, Niketas Stethatos proclaimed that 'to employ bread without leaven is to deny that Christ was God as well as man'.[126] The relevant passage in the eleventh-century *Protheoria* by Nicholas of Andida brings to mind the descent of the Holy Spirit that impregnated and therefore 'leavened' Mary for the birth of the heavenly bread, the Logos incarnate.[127] In the fifteenth century, Symeon of Thessalonike placed great emphasis on the humanity of Christ that is manifested in the leavened bread, which is 'ensouled' (*empsychos*, 'with a soul'), in other words, it is alive 'on account of the leaven'. His description also evokes the descent of the Holy Spirit through which the Logos took on human nature and 'became flesh'.[128] Referring to the extraction of the Lamb from the eucharistic loaf, he says, 'Thus the priest cuts that leavened bread from the middle of the bread, manifesting in this that the Saviour was incarnated of our nature and not of another essence, and from one woman, the blessed, holy, and ever-virgin maiden … '[129] The iconography of the Blachernitissa can be considered a vivid visualisation of these ideas: Mary, as the altar or paten holding the heavenly bread or as the eucharistic loaf sealed with the stamp that defines the 'Lamb', is also pregnant with the Sun of Justice, and leavened by the Holy Spirit so as to become the sanctuary of God.

It is possible that the eucharistic connotations of the Blachernitissa were an important reason for its increasing popularity in the decoration of church apses from the twelfth century onwards.[130] Already from the eleventh century the Byzantine Church was embroiled in various dogmatic disputes concerning the Eucharist. One of them concerned the use of unleavened bread by the Latins. This continued to be an issue in the following centuries, especially as parts of the empire came under Latin rule after 1204 and Byzantine Christians came into closer contact and disputes with people who followed the Roman rite.[131] This controversy was a concern not only

126 Ibid.

127 'Therefore, in this way, the blessed ones continued to make remembrance of him [Christ], so that through the divine symbols the body was consecrated (ἀποτελεῖν) sound and whole, with mind and soul (ἔννουν καὶ ἔμψυχον), through the leaven put into the dough, and filled with divinity in essence.' See PG 140, 420C. The terms ἔννουν and ἔμψυχον especially recall references to the incarnation through Mary and the Holy Spirit; see Lampe, *Lexicon* s.v. ἔννοος.

128 Symeon of Thessalonike, *On the Sacred Liturgy* 35, PG 155, 265; Hawkes-Teeples, *St Symeon*, 186–9.

129 Symeon of Thessalonike, *On the Sacred Liturgy* 63, PG 155, 273–6; trans. based on Hawkes-Teeples, *St Symeon*, 204–5.

130 A. Weyl Carr and L. Morrocco, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered, the Thirteenth-Century Murals of Lysi, Cyprus* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991), 43–4.

131 J. Darrouzès, 'Nicolas d'Andida et les Azymes', *REB* 32 (1974): 199–210. Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 47, 58–9.

for clerics but also for laity, who could relate to theological issues through the familiar element of bread.[132] The Latins argued that unleavened bread reflected the virginal and miraculous conception of Christ by the Virgin and the Holy Spirit (without the addition of leaven, that is, male semen).[133] It was therefore particularly fitting for the Byzantines to reverse this argument and see in the leavened bread the same virginal and miraculous conception with the energy of the Holy Spirit leavening the body of the Theotokos (as the above passage by Symeon of Thessalonike implies). In other words, it would have been particularly appropriate to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the leavened bread by means of an image of the Virgin pregnant with the Sun of Justice, as seen in the Blachernitissa iconography. Another issue that continued to require affirmation in the context of theological disputes troubling the Byzantine Church was the identification of the Eucharist with Christ's true body.[134] If the Blachernitissa iconography presents Jesus as the heavenly bread on the living altar or paten of the Theotokos, or as the sacrificial Lamb on the eucharistic loaf of Mary's body, it underlines the orthodox dogma of the identification of the Eucharist with Christ's flesh and blood, the body born through Mary. Scholars have attributed similar references to the *Melismos* iconography in which the eucharistic gifts are depicted literally as the body of Christ.[135]

Another dispute of the twelfth century challenged the orthodox dogma according to which Christ is not only the one offering the sacrifice and being offered in it, but also receives it together with the other two persons of the Trinity.[136] It can be said that the Blachernitissa iconography reinforces this teaching by emphasising the two natures of Christ, human and divine (in their roles of offering and receiving): he appears as a child in his mother's womb, and as the sacrificial Lamb on her body, offering himself and being offered. At the same time he is the Sun of Justice in heaven, receiving the thanksgiving offering of his people. Thanks to its formal and symbolic qualities and its eucharistic connotations, the Blachernitissa is a particularly potent image, kaleidoscopically pregnant with meanings.[137]

132 Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 58–9.

133 Darrouzès, 'Azymes', 206.

134 Gerstel, *Beholding the Mysteries*, 45–7.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid., 44–5; Milliner, 'Virgin of the Passion', 109–11.

137 The mosaics of the Chora in Constantinople offer corroborating evidence on the eucharistic significance of the Blachernitissa. See R. Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora: An Image and its Context', in R. Ousterhout and L. Brubaker (eds.), *The Sacred Image East and West* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 91–109, esp. 98–9.

Figure 4.17 Wooden *panagiarion* decorated in the interior with the Virgin and Child (right) and the Hospitality of Abraham (left). Russian creation following Byzantine models, around 1500 or later, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (photo in the public domain at: https://metmuseum.org/art/collection).

A further argument in support of the eucharistic connotations of the Blachernitissa comes from the iconography of *panagiaria* (Figure 4.17).[138] These were holy vessels used to contain a piece cut from the eucharistic bread before its consecration, which was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. *Panagiaria* were also used to elevate any kind of bread in the name of the Virgin and thus bestow upon it the power to protect the consumer in time of danger, sickness or other need, when it was not possible to receive the Eucharist itself. The *panagiarion* bread was not, strictly speaking, eucharistic, but it was treated with great reverence, received as a blessing in the absence of the Eucharist. Byzantine epigrams for *panagiaria* contain clear eucharistic allusions, such as a reference to the heavenly bread or to food which offers immortality, and to the holy altar that is often identified with the Virgin.[139] A common decoration for *panagiaria* is the Blachernitissa, or a variant in which Christ's bust emerges directly from the folds of her

[138] I. Drpić, 'Notes on Byzantine Panagiaria', *Zograf* 35 (2011): 51–62; J. Yiannias, 'The Elevation of the Panaghia', *DOP* 26 (1972): 225–36.

[139] Drpić, 'Panagiaria', 56–9.

maphorion (without the medallion).[140] On the basis of such textual and visual evidence, the sacred nature of *panagiaria* and of the bread which they provide seems largely dependent upon the eucharistic role of Mary. She is the *Panagia* (All-holy) who offers Christ's salvific body as heavenly bread in the Eucharist and provides blessed bread as a protective and healing substance in the *panagiarion* (a holy vessel named after her and materially evoking her own body as container and bearer of the sacred). The interior decoration of the Russian *panagiarion* of Figure 4.17 (around 1500 or later) follows the Byzantine tradition and highlights the eucharistic connotations of Mary with Christ in her bosom through the depiction, on the facing disc, of the Hospitality of Abraham, an Old Testament prefiguration of the Eucharist. The text inscribed on the rim of the two discs is a Russian translation of the Byzantine hymn to the Theotokos known as *Axion Esti*, which is still sung during the Liturgy in the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches.[141] A Cretan *panagiarion* of the late fifteenth century, ordered for and still kept at the Monastery of St John the Theologian on the Greek island of Patmos, repeats and further highlights the eucharistic significance of this combination of scenes: the Hospitality of Abraham on the right interior disc faces a miniature depiction of a common iconography of Byzantine church apses, on the left disc: Mary appears enthroned, holding Christ and flanked by bowing archangels.[142]

The decoration of a fourteenth-century *panagiarion*, now in the Xeropotamou Monastery on Mount Athos, has even more pronounced eucharistic connotations.[143] Right above the Blachernitissa, we see the altar with the Christ Child in the iconography of the *Melismos*. The adult Christ is depicted left and right of the altar, accompanied by angels dressed like priests and deacons, together celebrating the Great Entrance, the solemn procession that leads the holy gifts from the prosthesis to the sanctuary altar for their transubstantiation. In this composition the Virgin containing Christ is not only analogous to the *panagiarion* containing the bread but also to the altar displaying the eucharistic gifts in the form of the Child. This analogy is

[140] Ibid., figs. 1, 3, for the variant. I. Kalavrezou, 'The Mother of God in Steatite', in Vassilaki, *Mother of God,* 190–1, fig. 127, for a Blachernitissa example discussed later.

[141] See images and online information at the MET website: https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/467608.

[142] Image and brief description by M. Chatzidakis, 'Icons', in A. D. Komines (ed.), *Patmos: Treasures of the Monastery* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1988), 115, 148 (fig. 21). Chatzidakis mentions another *panagiarion* in the same collection, the interior of which is decorated with the Blachernitissa on one disc, facing Christ as High Priest on the other. This combination of themes also has eucharistic connotations.

[143] Kalavrezou, 'The Mother of God in Steatite', 190–1, fig. 127.

made even clearer by the archangels Michael and Gabriel dressed as deacons and incensing the Blachernitissa, exactly as deacons cense the altar with the eucharistic gifts before communion, as Ioli Kalavrezou has noted.[144] Angels are also depicted with censers when they participate in representations of the Great Entrance.[145] In Byzantine liturgical commentaries, angels are mentioned as the heavenly models of deacons and priests,[146] who actually incense the holy gifts and the altar during the Divine Liturgy.[147] Consequently, when angels appear censing the Virgin, her identification as altar and container of the eucharistic body of Christ becomes even more obvious.

At present I am aware of a few examples of the incensed Mary, the earliest being a fifth-century wall-painting from chapel 28 of the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit in Egypt.[148] The depiction of angels censing Mary while she holds a medallion with Christ might indicate that the Eucharist was celebrated in this chapel. In the sixth-century wall-paintings of the Red Monastery in Egypt, the Virgin Galaktotrophousa (Milk-nourishing) is depicted in the north apse of the sanctuary, flanked by censing angels (Figure 4.18).[149] Elizabeth Bolman argues that the Virgin breastfeeding her child has eucharistic connotations in Coptic Christianity.[150] In this case her hypothesis is reinforced by the presence of the censing angels. Likewise, the appearance of censing angels on a thirteenth-century icon of the Blachernitissa on Mount Sinai might indicate that this sizeable panel was created for a space in which the Eucharist could be celebrated.[151] In addition, two angels incense Mary holding Christ in the apse of the church of St Nicholas in Agorgiane (Peloponnese, Greece), dated around 1300.[152] Wall-paintings of the Virgin censed by the archangels Michael and Gabriel are rather popular in the sanctuary apse of Cypriot churches. The earliest example survives in the church of Panagia tou Moutoula (1280, half-figured Blachernitissa).[153]

144 Ibid. See also Papamastorakis, *Ο διάκοσμος*, 153.

145 Papamastorakis, *Ο διάκοσμος*, plates 86, 89, 103, 104, 110, 111, 113, 128.

146 E.g. in the twelfth-century commentary attributed to Sophronios of Jerusalem, PG 87.3, 3984C, 3985D–3988D.

147 Taft, *Great Entrance*, 149–62.

148 A. Grabar, *Martyrium*, 2 vols. (London: Variorum Reprints, 1972), vol. 2, 176–7, pl. LIV, 1.

149 E. Bolman (ed.), *The Red Monastery Church. Beauty and Asceticism in Upper Egypt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 139–46, esp. 144, figs. 10.19, 10.21.

150 E. Bolman, 'The Enigmatic Coptic Galaktotrophousa and the Cult of the Virgin Mary in Egypt', in Vassilaki, *Images of the Mother of God*, 13–22.

151 E. Bakalova, 'Icon with the Virgin Blachernitissa', in H. Evans (ed.), *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1216–1557)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 352–3.

152 M. Emmanuel, 'Οι τοιχογραφίες του Αγίου Νικολάου στην Αγόριανη Λακωνίας', *DChAE* 14 (1987–8): 114–16, 131, figs. 6–7.

153 A. and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus* (London: Trigraph, 1985), 325. D. Mouriki, 'The Wall Paintings of the Church of the Panagia at Moutoullas, Cyprus', in I.

A badly damaged depiction with a full-figured Blachernitissa can be seen in the apse of St Mamas at Sotira, possibly of the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century.[154] The theme of the archangels censing Mary proliferated in villages of Mount Troodos, between the late fifteenth and mid sixteenth centuries (Figures 4.19–20).[155] Although Doula Mouriki has argued that the censing angels are a theme of Western origin,[156] the motif is entirely consonant with the Byzantine theology and ritual of the Eucharist. Therefore, regardless of its provenance, this iconography can be termed Byzantine in its message, and it was seamlessly integrated into Byzantine objects like the Xeropotamou *panagiarion*. In all of the above visual examples, the eucharistic connotations of Mary's representation would have been amplified through aural and other sensorial stimuli in the context of Byzantine rituals.

Conclusion

The material that has been discussed in this chapter is necessarily selective and diffused in terms of time and place. It includes evidence from the Byzantine mainland as well as from areas that formerly belonged to the empire and retained strong Byzantine elements in their religious tradition (such as Cyprus). Nevertheless, this diversity of evidence strongly suggests that the eucharistic perception of Mary was a widespread concept in Byzantium, consonant with basic theological beliefs and religious practices, which provided dogmatic validation and experiential confirmation of the Virgin's eucharistic role.

Each depiction of the Theotokos in a church sanctuary could refer to her eucharistic role in different ways and activate an array of meanings,

Hutter (ed.) *Byzanz und der Westen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1984), 175–8. I thank Maria Parani for drawing my attention to this example and to three more cases mentioned below, as well as for directing me to relevant literature. The following list is not exhaustive.

154 I thank Annemarie Weyl Carr and Allan Langdale for drawing my attention to this monument and sharing images and information. The dating is according to an oral communication by Weyl Carr.

155 Currently I am aware of seven examples: three with Mary in the Blachernitissa iconography (Archangel Michael at Pedoulas, fig. 32: Holy Cross of Agiasmati near Platanistasa and Theotokos at Kakopetria); three with Mary *orans* (Transfiguration of the Savior at Palaeochorio, as well as St Sozomenos and Archangel Michael at Galata); and one with Mary enthroned and holding Christ (Panagia Podithou, Galata, fig. 33). Stylianou, *Churches of Cyprus*, 339 and fig. 205; 206, 211, 213, 217–18 and figs. 122–3; 79 and fig. 34; 270 and fig. 168; 88; 93; 99.

156 Mouriki, 'Moutoullas', 176–7 (but cf. n. 15).

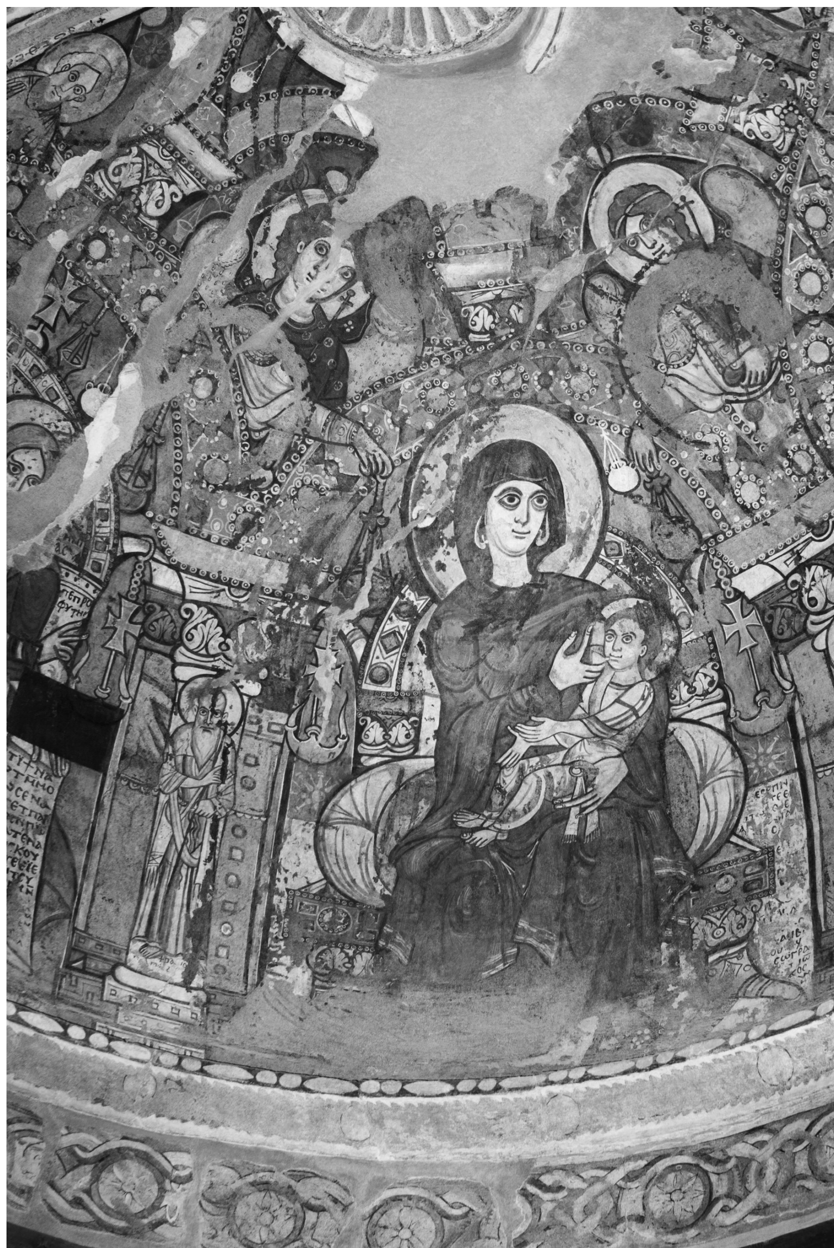

Figure 4.18 Virgin *Galaktotrophousa* ('milk-nourishing'), incensed by two angels. North apse of the triconch sanctuary, Church of the Red Monastery, sixth century, Sohag, Egypt (photo: B. O'Kane/Alamy Stock).

Figure 4.19 Virgin Blachernitissa incensed by archangels Michael and Gabriel. Sanctuary apse, Church of Archangel Michael, Pedoulas, 1474, Cyprus (photo: Bildagentur-online/Sunny Celeste/Alamy Stock Photo).

depending on specific contexts and viewers. The symbolic character of such images allowed Mary to embody the timefulness of Christian faith and to encompass the whole history of salvation: from Eden and the Fall to the first chosen people of God and the turning point of the incarnation, to the new chosen people and their eucharistic Church, and finally to the heavenly banquet prepared for them at the end of time. In her role as paradise of the Tree of Life, New Eve, Tabernacle and Temple, Mother of God, Ecclesia, sanctuary and altar table of Divine Wisdom, Mary contained in herself the entire trajectory of human exile and homecoming, as only the container of the uncontainable could do.[157] This fullness of meaning is a typical example of the fluidity and richness of symbolic thought in medieval Christianity, when it was common for symbols to generate an abundance of alternative, intersecting and complementary interpretations in the minds of diverse audiences.[158] The same fullness relates to the paramount

[157] The Theotokos was frequently described as container of the uncontainable (χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου) in Byzantine culture, since she contained in her womb the creator whom the whole universe cannot contain. See Ousterhout, 'Virgin of the Chora', 97–8.

[158] C. Walker Bynum observes that 'the range and richness of medieval symbols have something to teach us about the impoverishment of our own'. See her *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 299.

Figure 4.20 Enthroned Virgin with Christ, incensed by archangels holding candles on stands, above the Communion of the Apostles. Sanctuary apse, Church of Panagia Podithou, 1502, Galata, Cyprus (photo: Ivan Vdovin/Alamy Stock).

theological and cultural significance of Mary in Byzantium. In the words of Andrew of Crete: 'She is the great world in miniature, the world containing him who brought the world from nothingness into being, that it might be the messenger of his own greatness.'[159] This all-encompassing capacity of the Theotokos was due to her pivotal role in the incarnation and by extension in human salvation.[160]

Mary's kaleidoscopic fullness of meaning was particularly active in her apse representations, exactly because of their eucharistic context and content. After all, the Theotokos and the Eucharist shared the same layered richness of meaning: the ritual performed in front of Mary re-enacted the story of human salvation through Christ's incarnation and sacrifice made possible through his mother. The image of the Theotokos presiding over

[159] Andrew of Crete, *Homily II on the Dormition*, trans. B. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1997), 133. I owe this reference to Mary Cunningham.

[160] Compare the relevant observations by Cunningham, 'Nourishment', 243–4, who notes the many layers of meaning and typological references woven into the Byzantine homiletic tradition of Mary in order to emphasise her role in the incarnation.

the Eucharist contributed to the meaning of the ritual as much as the ritual contributed to the meaning of the image. Given Mary's centrality in Byzantine culture as a whole, and the Eucharist's centrality in the life of the Church, it is no wonder that the depiction of the Theotokos in the apse, which joins the Mother of God and the ritual of his union with his people, is one of the most enduring images of Byzantium and its heritage.

5 The Virgin at Daphni

LESLIE BRUBAKER*

The monastic church at Daphni, about 10 km outside of Athens, is a monument with little documentation attached to it: the date of ca. 1080–1100 usually assigned to the church and its decoration, however likely, is speculative and based on the architecture and style of mosaic decoration rather than archival evidence.[1] The monastery was apparently dedicated to the Koimesis (Dormition) of the Virgin. No inscription documenting this commemoration is preserved in the church, but the dedication to the Koimesis is cited in the only textual mention of the monastery, the *Life of Meletios*, written by Theodore Prodromos during the first half of the twelfth century, which indicates that it was a male monastery.[2] The identity of the patron is unknown. Because two frescoes discovered near the door to the narthex in the late nineteenth century showed emperors, the founder is sometimes

* It is a pleasure to thank the editors of this volume and the participants in the three seminars at which I presented this material – Oxford University; University of Madrid; University of California at Los Angeles – for their helpful comments. Thanks also to Kallirroe Linardou for help with tracking down bibliography; Georgia Michael for assistance with the Greek archaeological and restoration reports; Sharon Gerstel and Panagiota Mantouvalou for images; and Chris Wickham, as always.

[1] A late eleventh-century dating was proposed by G. Millet, *Le monastère de Daphni. Histoire, architecture, mosaiques* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1899), 109–10, and has been generally accepted. See e.g. C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1976), 222; R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed., rev. by R. Krautheimer and S. Ćurčić (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 390. Basing his arguments on the classicising elements of the mosaics, A. Frolow, 'Le date des mosaïques de Daphni', *Revue archéologique* (1962): 183–208, attempted to redate the mosaics to the early eleventh century, but this argument not been accepted in subsequent scholarship, though it is noted by R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1975), 311–13, in his overview of the church.

[2] Millet, *Le monastère de Daphni*, 17–19; repeated in Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, 311. There are also two seals associated with Daphni, an eleventh- or twelfth-century example naming the *proedros* Paul of Daphni; the other (which exists in three examples) – dated by Laurent to the tenth century, but ascribed to the eleventh/twelfth century by Nesbitt and Oikonomides – inscribed (on the reverse of an image of the Virgin orans) the Theotokos [named] Daphnin: J. Nesbitt and N. Oikonomides (eds.), *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art,* vol. 2 (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 1994), 54. For both, V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin,* vol. 5 (Paris: CNRS, 1963–72), nos. 1244–5.

linked with the Byzantine imperial house,[3] but – as pointed out long ago by Gabriel Millet – these frescoes were added to the church during the Ottoman period after the period of Cistercian use of the church during the Latin occupation of Athens; they left (around 1458) and the church was returned to Orthodox control.[4] The frescoes demonstrate that in the post-Byzantine period the monastery was associated with the imperial house, but we cannot know whether or not the connection was based on knowledge of actual imperial patronage in the eleventh or early twelfth century.

Despite the absence of documentation, the church at Daphni is one of the most famous Byzantine monuments to have survived. Along with the slightly earlier Hosios Loukas in Phokis on the Greek mainland and the Nea Moni on the island of Chios, it is one of the three 'classic' Middle Byzantine churches immortalised by Ernest Diez and Otto Demus in their *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece*,[5] and it was further valorised by Demus in his iconic *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*.[6] Rightly or wrongly, to non-Byzantinists and specialists alike, the dome mosaic of the Pantokrator at Daphni is one of the defining images of Byzantine art, and Daphni is one of the very few monuments cited in histories of medieval art written by non-Byzantinists.[7] It even features in 'universal' surveys such as H. W. Janson's *History of Art*, where the Crucifixion mosaic (Figure 5.12) is reproduced and credited with 'a restrained and noble suffering of the kind we first met in Greek art of the fifth century BC'.[8]

A main player in the Crucifixion panel is the Virgin Mary, whose 'gentle pathos' is – still following Janson – a key component of this classicising 'appeal to the emotions of the beholder'.[9] Daphni's role as a token representative of Middle Byzantine art available to a wide audience, and the prominence given to Mary's role in this connection, makes it all the more surprising that so little has been written by specialists about the monument or its decoration since the first half of the twentieth century, and – especially given the interest in portrayals of the Virgin generated by the exhibition

[3] E.g. by O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1948), 60.

[4] Millet, *Le monastère de Daphni*, 21–2. On the Cistercian occupation, ibid., 25–42. For a line drawing, see G. Lampakes, *Χριστιανική ἀρχαιολογία τῆς Μονῆς Δαφνίου* (Athens: Papageorgiou, 1889), 71, 98.

[5] E. Diez and O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece: Hosios Lucas and Daphni* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931).

[6] Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*.

[7] As has been noted by others: see e.g. R. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 295 n. 10.

[8] I cite here the 4th ed., revised and expanded by A. F. Janson (New York: Abrams, 1991), 278, fig. 355.

[9] Ibid.

of Marian imagery in Athens in 2000[10] – that the extensive sequence of Marian images preserved in the church has been so little discussed. Unlike its usual comparators, the Nea Moni on Chios and Hosios Loukas, both of which sustain monographs and numerous scholarly articles,[11] aside from the short guidebook published in Athens and available at the site, the only books devoted solely to Daphni were published in the nineteenth century: Georgios Lampakes' two archaeological overviews of 1889 followed by Millet's *Le monastère de Daphni: Histoire, architecture, mosaiques*, published in Paris in 1899. The few articles devoted to the church have either been rejected by subsequent scholars,[12] or focus on specific aspects of the church: the archaeology of the site;[13] technical details of its mosaics;[14] the style of the mosaics;[15] and the dome mosaic of Christ Pantokrator.[16]

[10] For the catalogue: M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens and Milan: Skira, 2000).

[11] For Nea Moni, see e.g. C. Bouras, *Nea Moni on Chios: History and Architecture* (Athens: Commercial Bank of Greece, 1982); D. Mouriki, *Nea Moni on Chios: The Mosaics* (Athens: Commercial Bank of Greece, 1986); H. Maguire, 'The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading', *DOP* 46 (1992): 205–14; and R. Ousterhout, 'Originality in Byzantine Architecture: The Case of Nea Moni', *JSAH* 51 (1992): 48–60. For Hosios Loukas, see e.g. M. Chatzidakis, 'A propos de la date et du fondateur de Saint-Luc', *CArch* 19 (1969): 128–50; C. Connor, *Art and Miracles in Medieval Byzantium: The Crypt at Hosios Loukas and its Frescoes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); N. Oikonomides, 'The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas', *DOP* 46 (1992): 245–5; A. Schminck, 'Hosios Lukas: Eine kaiserliche Stiftung?', in V. N. Vlysidou (ed.), *The Empire in Crisis(?): Byzantium in the Eleventh Century (1025–1081)* (Athens: Institute of Byzantine Research, 2003), 349–80; and N. Chazidakis, 'La presence de l'higoumène Philothéos dans le catholicon de Saint-Luc en Phocide (Hosios Loukas): Nouvelles remarques', *CArch* 54 (2011/12): 17–32.

[12] Frolow, 'Le date des mosaïques de Daphni': see n. 1 of this chapter.

[13] C. Bouras, 'The Daphni Monastic Complex Reconsidered', in I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (eds.), *Aetos, Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1998), 1–14. Bouras demonstrates that the fortifications surrounding the present church are not remnants from the Justinianic period, as previous scholarship maintained, but contemporary with the eleventh-century church that stands today. He does not mention the mosaics.

[14] For technical analyses of glass, see R. Arletti, 'A Study of Glass Tesserae from Mosaics in the Monasteries of Daphni and Hosios Loukas', in C. Entwistle and L. James (eds.), *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass* (London: British Museum, 2013), 70–5; and P. Loukopoulou and A. Moropoulou, 'Notes on the Morphology of the Gold Glass Tesserae from Daphni Monastery', in Entwistle and James, *New Light on Old Glass*, 76–81. For the most recent conservation report on the mosaics, see E. A. Chlepa, *Byzantine Monuments in Modern Greece: Theory and Practice of the Restorations, 1833–1939* (in Greek) (Athens: Ekdoseis Kapon, 2011), 76–102. I am grateful to Kallirroe Linardou for sending me this, and the two books by Lampakes mentioned earlier, none of which are available in the UK.

[15] R. Cormack, 'Viewing the Mosaics of the Monasteries of Hosios Loukas, Daphni and the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello', in Entwistle and James, *New Light on Old Glass*, 242–53. Cormack provides a good overview of the bibliography on the church.

[16] R. Cormack, 'Rediscovering the Christ Pantokrator at Daphni', *JWCI* 71 (2008): 55–74. Cormack develops John Shearman's observations on the relationship between observer and

While Daphni is also mentioned in the course of more detailed discussions of other Middle Byzantine monuments,[17] its portrayals of the Virgin have been largely ignored.[18] Even the recent proliferation of publications on the Mother of God has barely exploited the mosaics at Daphni,[19] despite the fact that the church preserves one of the earliest sequences of images dedicated to the life of the Virgin, in any medium. These scenes are the subjects of this chapter. We shall see that this sequence was not only new, but often uniquely innovative in the prominence which it gives the Virgin in the classic scenes of Christian iconography. We shall also see that the scenes from the life of the Virgin were placed and manipulated to work with the architecture of the church. The scenes of the Virgin are, in many cases, first found in a monumental setting at Daphni, but more important still is the interplay between the image and its setting; that is, between the image and the architecture. This interplay adds a new layer of meaning to the iconography: the architecture helps to construct the meaning of the scenes. The concern with innovative manipulation and the image–architecture dialectic has not been much discussed before in analyses of Byzantine imagery, and both need to be looked at more widely. This chapter, beyond being a contribution to the development of Marian imagery in itself, aims to show the ways in which such analyses could work elsewhere.

The dedication to the Dormition of the Virgin did not require the inclusion of scenes of Mary's early life, but it indicates that whoever founded the monastery and commissioned the church held the Virgin in high regard. This is corroborated by the number of scenes focusing on the Theotokos in the church.

The scenes preserved are identified and located in Figure 5.1A. Following the chronological order of Mary's life as set out in the Gospels and the

observed at Daphni in the latter's *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 161–5.

17 See especially L. James, 'Monks, Monastic Art, the Sanctoral Cycle and the Middle Byzantine Church', in M. Mullett and A. Kirby (eds.), *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh-Century Monasticism*, Belfast Byzantine texts and translations 6.1 (Belfast: Queen's University, 1994), 162–75.

18 The major exception here is J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en occident*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1964) which considers the relevant scenes as part of her larger study, but does not discuss the mosaics that include the adult Virgin.

19 The scenes from the life of the Virgin at Daphni are mentioned in passing only twice in the large volume accompanying the major exhibition on the Theotokos in Athens in 2000 (Vassilaki, *Mother of God*, 104, 130) and not at all in the companion volume of essays delivered at the associated symposium: M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005). B. Pentcheva, *Icons*

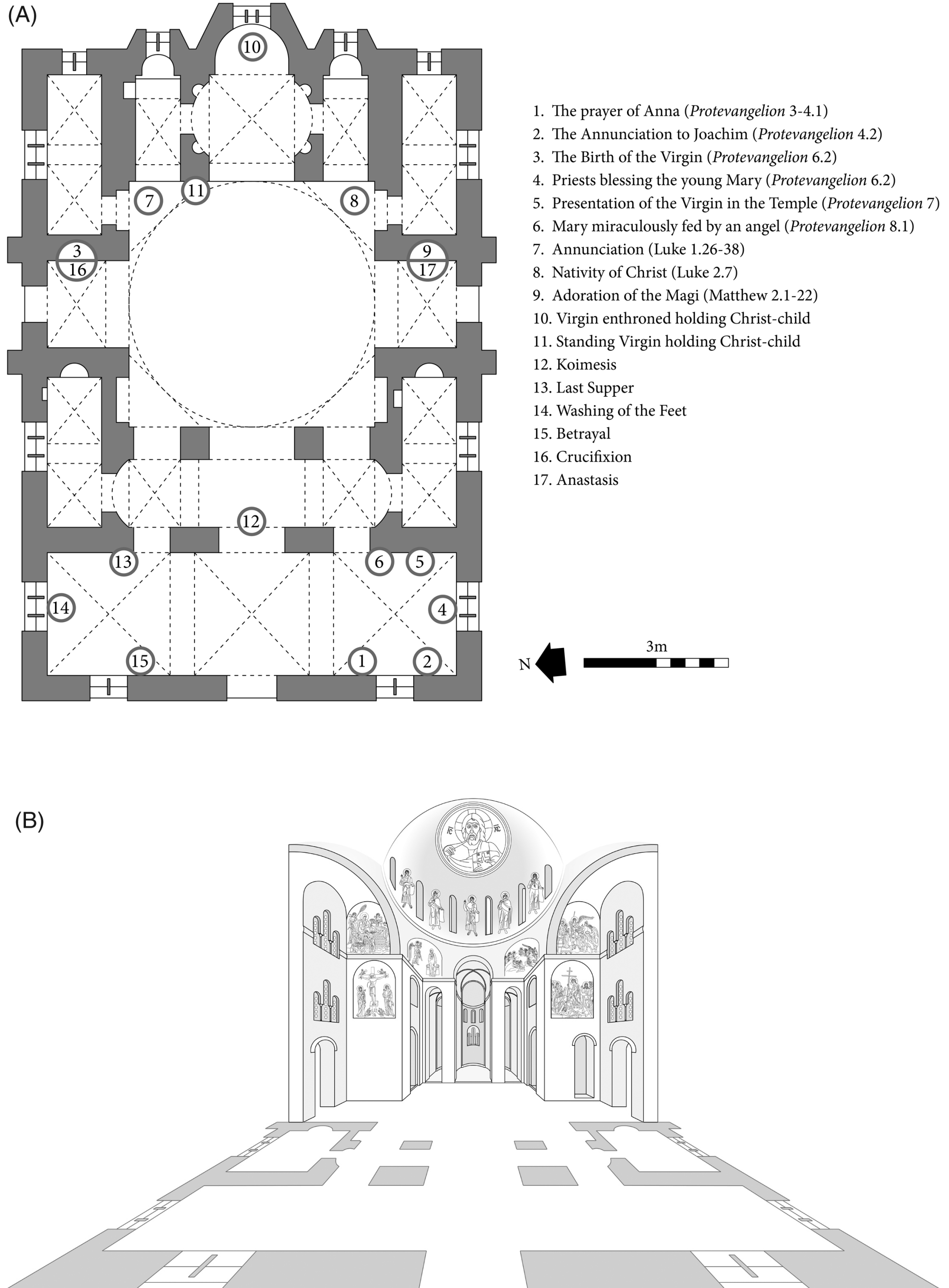

Figure 5.1A and B Daphni, schematic plans, showing location of scenes and interior view, with plan (plans designed and created by Matilde Grimaldi).

Protevangelium of James (the second-century apocryphal but widely read account of Mary's early life), they are:

1. The prayer of Anna (Mary's mother) asking for a child, and the angel's positive response (*Protevangelium* 3–4.1) (Figure 5.2).
2. The annunciation to Joachim (Mary's father) (*Protevangelium* 4.2), Anna's prayer and this annunciation appear in a single composition in the south narthex on the west wall (Figure 5.2).
3. The Birth of the Virgin (*Protevangelium* 5.2), presented in the north cross arm of the main church, on the upper segment of the east wall (Figure 5.11).
4. The Temple priests blessing the young Mary (*Protevangelium* 6.2), which appeared on the south wall of the narthex, with the priests (no longer preserved) to the left of the window and Joachim, carrying the young Mary and followed by Anna, on the right (Figure 5.3).
5. The Entrance of the Virgin into the Temple (*Protevangelium* 7), which also appears in the south narthex, on the east wall adjacent to the south entry into the main body of the church (Figure 5.4).
6. The Virgin miraculously fed by an angel in the Temple (*Protevangelium* 8.1), which anachronistically forms part of the previous scene.
7. The Annunciation (Lk 1:26–38), one of the best known scenes at Daphni, which appears in the northeast squinch (Figure 5.5).
8. The Nativity of Christ (Lk 2:7), which appears on the other eastern squinch, in the southeast corner of the central naos (Figure 5.6).
9. The Adoration of the Magi (Mt 2:1–22), which is depicted in the south cross arm, on the upper segment of the east wall (Figure 5.8).
10. The seated Virgin holding the Christ Child in her lap, which occupies the apse, as is customary from the sixth century onward in Byzantine churches.[20]
11. A standing figure of the Virgin holding the Christ Child, now preserved only partially, which fills the west face of the north pier of the bema (sanctuary). The south pier is occupied by a pendant figure of a standing adult Christ.
12. The Koimesis (Dormition) of the Virgin which appears, now missing its central third, above the central exit from the naos.

and Power. The Mother of God in Byzantium (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006), 138–9, discusses the Daphni mosaic of Mary's Entrance into the Temple.

[20] On the apse decoration of Byzantine churches, see J.-M. Spieser, 'The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches', *Gesta* 37 (1998): 63–73; repr. in his *Urban*

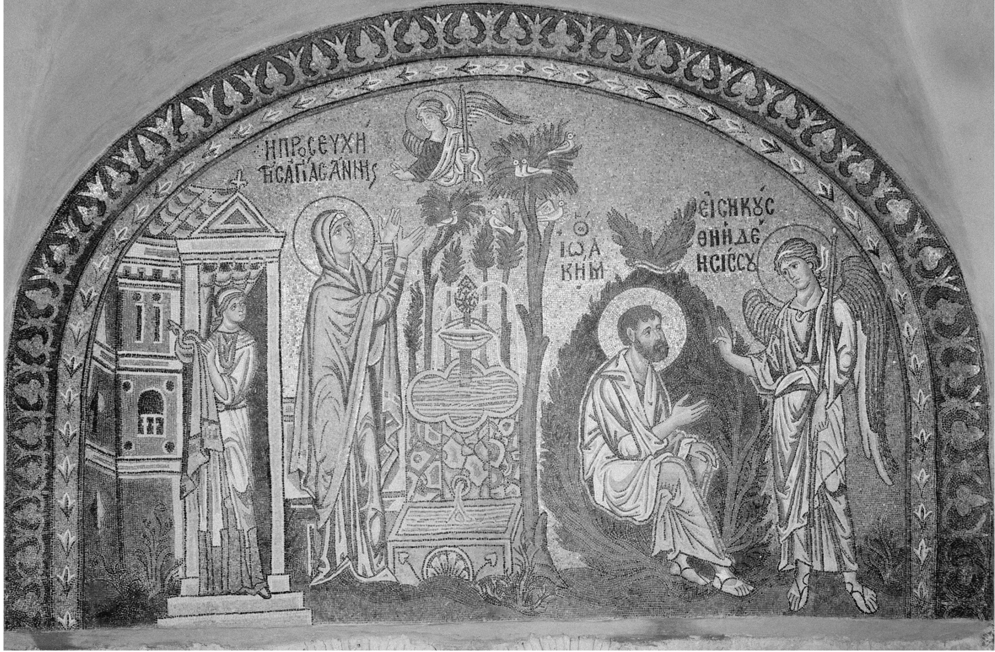

Figure 5.2 Daphni, Annunciation to Anna and Joachim (photo: Josephine Powell Photograph, GR.3-105. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University).

The Virgin images at Daphni thus fall into four clusters, showing twelve distinct moments in Mary's biography: the infancy scenes of the south narthex (five scenes in three panels; Figures 5.2–4); the four feast scenes of the east squinches and east wall of the cross arms (Figures 5.5, 5.6, 5.8, 5.12); the iconic portraits of the Virgin and child in the bema (two images); and a final feast scene, the Koimesis/Dormition, in the naos. She also appears in the well-known scene of the Crucifixion (Figure 5.12), as noted earlier, which is located below the mosaic of the birth of the Virgin on the east wall of the north cross arm. The only earlier monuments to preserve similarly extensive sequences of Marian scenes are a rock-cut church in Kızıl Çukur (Cappadocia), usually dated to around the year 900,[21] and Saint

and Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), study 16.

[21] C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords* (Paris: CNRS, 1991), 47–50, with earlier bibliography, the most important items of which are the discussions in N. Thierry and M. Thierry, 'Église de Kizil-Tchoukour, chapelle iconoclaste, chapelle de Joachim et d'Anne', *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 50 (1958): 105–46; and, for the dating, A. Wharton Epstein, 'The "Iconoclast" Churches of

Figure 5.3 Daphni, Synagogue leaders blessing Mary (photo: Ephorate of Antiquities of Western Attica, Greek Ministry of Culture and Sport, Fund of Archaeological Proceeds).

Sofia in Kiev, of the mid-eleventh century.[22] Most examples are far later, and belong to thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with the Chora monastery in Constantinople of 1316–21 providing a well-known representative.[23] There are no earlier sequences in other media.

Cappadocia', in A. A. M. Bryer and J. Herrin (eds.), *Iconoclasm: Papers Given at the 9th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977), 103–11, at 108–10. Most recently, see E. Panou, 'Aspects of St Anna's Cult in Byzantium' (unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), 227–32; E. Panou, *The Cult of St Anna in Byzantium* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 88–90. It should be noted that the paintings at Kızıl Çukur are of low quality, and badly damaged, which – as noted by Wharton Epstein – makes them particularly difficult to date; the widely accepted dating to ca. 900 should be read with considerable caution.

22 G. Logvin, *Собор Святої Софії в Києві (Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Kiev)* (in Ukrainian) (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 2001), 114–21, colour pls. 205–13. V. Lazarev, *Old Russian Murals and Mosaics* (London: Phaidon, 1966), 31–65, esp. 48–52.

23 Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie*, vol. 1, 35–53, lists all sequences known to her, with bibliography. She dates the columns at San Marco, Venice (ibid., 35), to the sixth century, but notes that many prefer a date in the thirteenth century; this group includes me, and I will not treat them here.

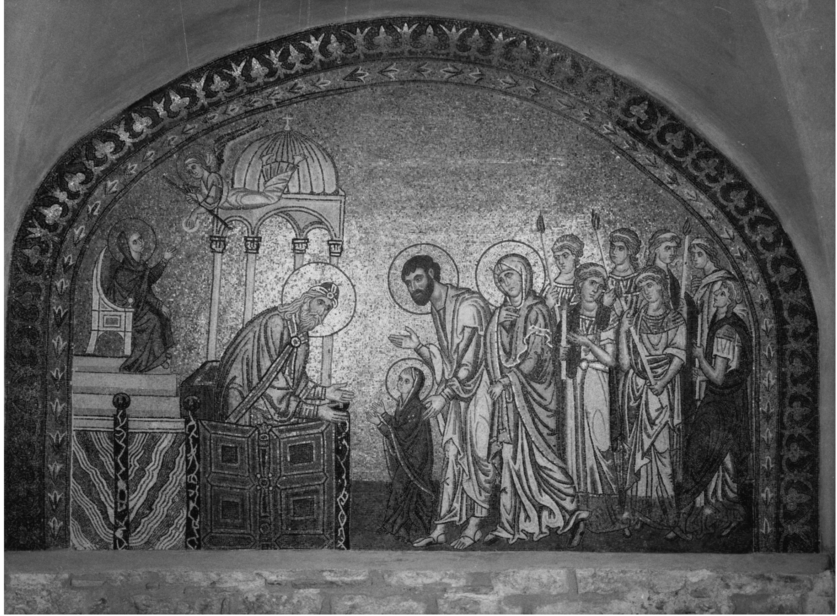

Figure 5.4 Daphni, Entrance of Virgin Mary into the Temple (photo: Josephine Powell Photograph, GR3.109. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University).

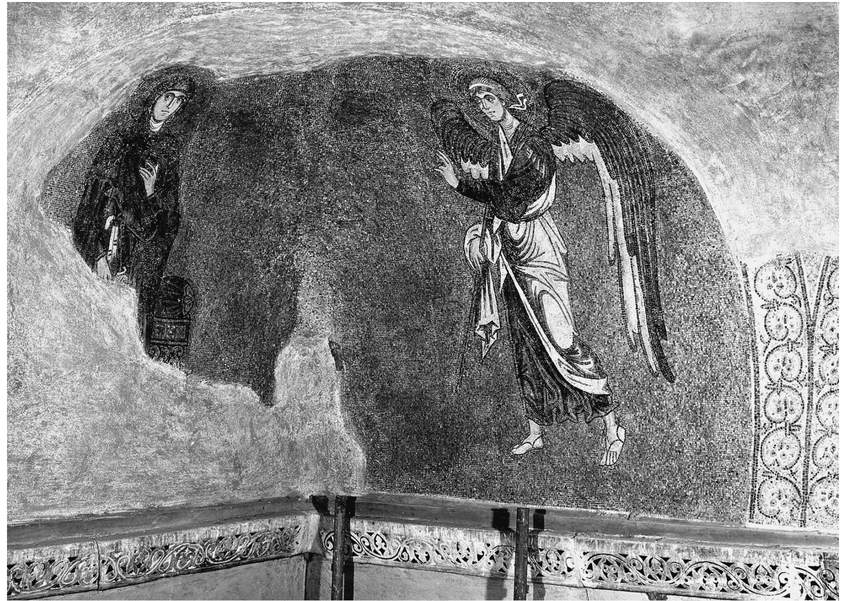

Figure 5.5 Daphni, Annunciation to the Virgin Mary (photo: Makis Skiadaresis, Corpus for Wall Mosaics in the North Adriatic Area, ca. 1974–1990s, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC).

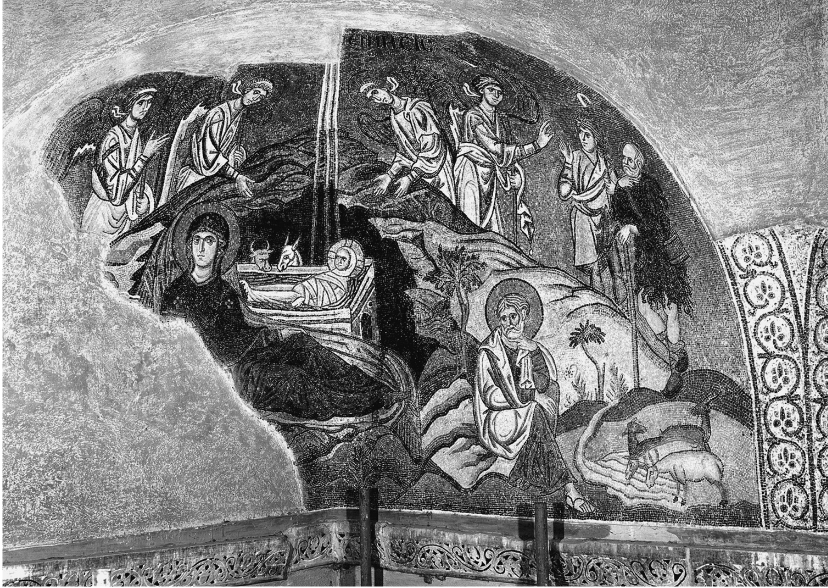

Figure 5.6 Daphni, Nativity of Christ (photo: Makis Skiadaresis, same as Figure 5.5). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

That the two earlier examples of Marian sequences appear so far afield – in Cappadocia and in Kievan Rus – suggests either that spontaneous (but sporadic) visual expressions of interest in the Virgin erupted across the Orthodox world in the tenth and eleventh centuries or, more likely, that these are simply the only examples preserved of a more widespread phenomenon. Comparison of the three sequences (see Appendix to this chapter) makes it clear that there was not a canonical sequence of images: the only episodes shared by all three are the Nativity of the Virgin and the Entrance into the Temple, joined – in all three cases – by the later episode of Mary fed by an angel. The Nativity and Entrance are major Orthodox liturgical feasts celebrating Mary's early life, and in other monuments they are often the only two scenes visualising the infancy and childhood of the Virgin to appear (if there is only one scene, it is almost invariably the Entrance into the Temple).[24] That these scenes are common to Daphni, the chapels of Joachim and Anna at Kızıl Çukur and Saint Sofia in Kiev is thus not an indication that the three sequences are related, although the incorporation of the later scene of Mary fed by an angel in the presentation scene suggests that all may ultimately depend on a tradition that telescoped these two chronologically discrete scenes together. As hymns and sermons celebrating Mary's years

[24] See the lists cited in the preceding note.

in the Temple habitually mention the angelic visitations and feeding, however, the association was an obvious one, and did not necessarily require a specific model. But, given their distant geographical locations, if there was an impetus behind these three earliest sequences, it is likely to have been generated in Constantinople, where Anna had been venerated from the sixth century onwards;[25] we have very few frescoes or mosaics from this period from the capital, but the volume of church dedications to the Virgin allows us to assume that many had Marian imagery.[26] In any event, of the remaining twelve scenes spread across the three sequences, seven appear in only one of the monuments; Kızıl Çukur and Kiev both depict one scene not found at Daphni (the meeting of Joachim and Anna); Kiev and Daphni include a single scene that does not appear at Kızıl Çukur (Mary's introduction to the priests in the Temple); while Kızıl Çukur and Daphni share two scenes now lacking from Kiev (the prayer of Anna, the annunciation to Joachim). In short, there is no indication that these three early sequences are closely related, though it is plausible to argue that all echo and respond to a well-known sequence that no longer survives, but was presumably located in the capital.

The programme at Daphni remains quite distinct from those at the two churches with which it is most often compared, Hosios Loukas and the Nea Moni, neither of which incorporate scenes from the life of the Virgin, though the Nea Moni includes medallion portraits of Joachim and Anna on either side of the main entrance from the inner narthex into the naos.[27] Robin Cormack's recent arguments linking the mosaic team responsible for Hosios Loukas with that at Daphni (and, later, Torcello) are complicated by the different composition of the glass tesserae used in each monument:[28] according to Rossella Arletti, the mosaic cubes at Daphni were created by mixing new plant ash glass with recycled natron glass while those at Hosios Loukas show much less reuse of natron glass.[29] The significance of this distinction is unclear, though the use of newer glass may suggest that

[25] Panou, 'Aspects of St Anna's Cult', 38–40. It can be added that the south chapel devoted to Joachim and Anna in the Justinianic monastery at Mount Sinai (which originally celebrated the Virgin rather than St Catherine) may retain its original dedication, as is assumed by K. Weitzmann, 'Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom', *DOP* 20 (1966): 51–83, at 68; repr. in his *Studies in the Arts at Sinai* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), study 12.

[26] Seventy-two of the 136 churches dedicated to the Virgin in Constantinople listed in R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantine*, vol. 1: *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarchate oecuménique III. Les églises et les monastères* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1969), 156–244, date to the years before 1200.

[27] Mouriki, *Nea Moni*, 69–70, 148–9, pls. 66–7.

[28] Cormack, 'Viewing the Mosaics', 242–53.

[29] Arletti, 'A Study of Glass Tesserae', 73–4.

the commissioners of Hosios Loukas had more resources available than did the patrons of Daphni. But the difference in glass composition does indicate that, whether or not the team responsible for setting the mosaics was the same, the glass source was not identical. This suggests one of three alternatives: first, that the glass used to make the tesserae at Hosios Loukas and Daphni was imported from two different production sites; second, that the 'contractor' at each site was the same but the supplier's stock changed between the time that glass was supplied to Phokis and to Daphni; or, third, that there were older cubes available for reuse at Daphni (this is the least likely: it should be noted that recent excavations have determined that the monastery was a new build, and not a reconstruction on the site of a previous monastery,[30] as once believed, so it seems unlikely that a stock of second-hand cubes was readily available). A fourth option is of course that it was not the same team, and, in view of the formal discrepancies between the two mosaic sequences, this seems the most likely possibility. But whether or not the patrons of Hosios Loukas and Daphni relied on the expertise of the same team of mosaicists, the designers of the two interiors had quite different agendas, as is clear from the lack of overlap between the saints pictured,[31] as well as from the absence of scenes from the life of the Virgin at Hosios Loukas. The importance of the Virgin at Daphni is also emphasised by the fact that, of the three 'classic' monuments, it is the only one to picture the Adoration of the Magi as a scene separate from the Nativity.[32]

The locations of the Marian images in the church were carefully chosen; and their companion scenes work with them to visualise larger theological concepts. As we saw, five scenes appear in the narthex. There are three entrances from the narthex into the naos, one in the north arm of the narthex (that is, to the left when one enters the church), one in the centre and one in the south arm. It is in the south arm that we find the five scenes: Anna's prayer and the annunciation to Joachim as a single composition on the west wall (Figure 5.2); the synagogue priests blessing the young Mary on the south wall (Figure 5.3); and the Entrance of the Virgin into the Temple, with the Virgin miraculously fed by an angel, on the east wall (Figure 5.4).

[30] Bouras, 'Daphni Monastic Complex'.

[31] Only Sts Stephen and Auxentios appear in all three, while Daphni and the Nea Moni share six additional saints; Hosios Loukas and Daphni share eleven; and Hosios Loukas and the Nea Moni share nine: James, 'Monks, Monastic Art', 165.

[32] And it is the only one of the three to preserve a scene of the Last Supper, though this may be due to later damage at the Nea Moni and at Hosios Loukas.

The clustering of scenes in the south arm of the narthex is unlikely to have been coincidental. Daphni was a male monastery, and aside from the Virgin and her mother, there are no female saints portrayed in the church; however, the constellation of scenes in the south arm of the narthex strongly suggests that at least this section of the building was open to women on specified occasions.[33] The saga of Anna's conception appears to have been carefully selected for precisely this context. Anna was regularly invoked by women hoping to conceive and by women hoping for safe childbirth;[34] her successful prayer for a child, and for the well-being of that child once born, were appropriate and apt scenes for female devotion, and appear in other Greek churches in chapels designated for female ritual use, including chapels in monasteries otherwise restricted to male monks.[35]

[33] On female access to specified sectors of male monasteries, often clear from the pattern of imagery and later graffiti, see the discussion in S. Gerstel, 'Painted Sources for Female Piety in Medieval Byzantium', *DOP* 52 (1998): 90–3; Gerstel also notes (94–5) that, whereas in monastic and metropolitan churches, women were often relegated to the north aisles, space was shared in smaller rural churches. The rural location of Daphni suggests that it is just barely possible, though – given its monastic and clearly elite status – unlikely, that women were allowed into the main body of the church; in that case however they would have most likely been channelled into the north side of the naos rather than the south side, though when and where women were segregated from men in churches is not always clear: see e.g. T. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1971), 130–4; R. Taft, 'Women at Church in Byzantium: Where, When – and Why?', *DOP* 52 (1998): 27–87; S. Gerstel, 'The Layperson in Church', in D. Krueger (ed.), *Byzantine Christianity* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2010), 113; A.-M. Talbot, 'The Devotional Life of Laywomen', in Krueger, *Byzantine Christianity*, 208–9. As is clear from the text, I argue that in this instance, at least, women were associated with the south side of the narthex, at least on specified occasions; whether they were also allowed on the north side cannot be said. In Byzantine three-part compositions, the central figure is inevitably the most important; the secondary figure is placed to the central figure's right (which is the viewer's left); the tertiary figure is on the left of the central figure (which is the viewer's right). Hence, at e.g. San Vitale in Ravenna (ca. 540), Christ is in the apse, the mosaic of Justinian is on the viewer's left (north side of the church, so on the right hand side of Christ) and the mosaic of Theodora is on the viewer's right (south side of the church, on the left hand side of Christ). The royal crown of Hungary (ca. 1075) provides an example demonstrating this same principle that is closer in date to Daphni: here Michael VII's son Constantine is portrayed to his right (our left) while Geza of Hungary appears on his left (our right). This visual hierarchy is best documented in imperial portraiture; nonetheless, at the Chora monastery in Constantinople (1316–21) Christ duly appears on the west face of the north pier with the Virgin on the west face of the south pier. For convenient reproductions of San Vitale, see H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1987); on the crown, see I. Kalavrezou, 'Irregular Marriages in the Eleventh Century and the Zoe and Constantine Mosaic in Hagia Sophia', in A. Laiou and D. Simon (eds.), *Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth–Twelfth Centuries* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 1994), 250–1; for the Chora, see P. Underwood (ed.), *The Kariye Djami,* vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 328–30.

[34] See Panou, 'Aspects of St Anna's Cult', esp. 185–90; Panou, *The Cult of St Anna*, 19–20.

[35] See Gerstel, 'Painted Sources', 96–8.

(The scenes of the north arm of the narthex – the Last Supper on the east wall, the Washing of the Feet on the north wall and the Betrayal of Christ by Judas on the west wall – were equally thematically united, and visually tied together through the celebrations of Holy Week. They were also appropriately located: the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday and the funeral rites invoked by the Passion scenes were normally situated in the narthex.[36] I will, however, leave non-Marian images in the church for a subsequent publication.)

Within the south arm of the narthex, the first scenes visible from the door into the church are the two depictions of Mary in the Temple; then, as one turns right into the narthex itself, the synagogue priests blessing the Virgin confront the viewer directly (though slightly above the average sight line); glancing to the right, one sees Anna's prayer and the annunciation to Joachim. This is in reverse narrative order: to follow the chronology correctly, one would need to turn into the narthex, look immediately to the right (for Anna's prayer and Joachim's annunciation), then straight ahead, for the priests blessing Mary, then left, as one approached the door to the naos, for the Virgin in the Temple. In other words, the narrative runs counter-clockwise in a 'U'-shape along the walls of the south arm of the narthex, from west wall to south wall to east wall. Indeed, the entire narrative sequence of the narthex runs counter-clockwise, from the prayer of Anna on the west wall of the south arm of the narthex to the Betrayal of Christ by Judas on the west wall of the north arm of the narthex. This layout was presumably conditioned by a desire to locate the two scenes most important to the Orthodox liturgy – the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple and the Last Supper – in the most important location, on the east wall, a principle applied throughout the rest of the building, as we shall see.[37] It also means that viewers would have to have already been inside the narthex wing if they wanted to follow the whole sequence.

[36] The connection between the Daphni mosaic and the Holy Thursday ritual was first noted by W. Tronzo, 'Mimesis in Byzantium: Notes toward a History of the Function of the Image', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 25 (1994): 61–76, though his emphasis was on the Nea Moni and Hosios Loukas, both of which also locate the washing of the feet in the narthex. On burial in the narthex, see e.g. E. Ivison, 'Mortuary Practices in Byzantium (ca. 950–1453): An Archaeological Contribution' (unpubl. PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1993); N. Constas, 'Death and Dying in Byzantium', in Krueger, *Byzantine Christianity*, 132.

[37] Both the Last Supper and the Entrance into the Temple also involve eating, with Christ at table and the Virgin offered food by an angel on the far left side of the two compositions. Too little remains of the Last Supper, however, to determine whether this parallelism was exploited by the mosaicists.

The Entrance of the Virgin into the Temple was an important liturgical feast, celebrated on 21 November from probably the eighth century onward; the earliest homilies dedicated specifically to the event are two attributed to Germanos, patriarch of Constantinople between 715 and 730. While Mary Cunningham, in the most recent discussion of these texts, is ambivalent about their authenticity, she notes that by the middle of the ninth century texts celebrated the feast 'in great abundance'.[38] From this time onwards – and certainly by the time that Daphni was built and decorated – the presentation of the Virgin was sufficiently significant that, as noted earlier, when only one image from Mary's life before the Annunciation appears in Byzantine churches, manuscripts and other media, it is inevitably the Entrance into the Temple.

Following the chronology of Mary's life, the next scene to appear at Daphni is the Annunciation in the northeast squinch (Figure 5.5). This, too, is a significant location: as Demus noted long ago, the squinches on the eastern side of the central naos are visually more important than those on the western side, since these are the scenes first seen upon entering the interior of the church.[39] The particular significance of the location on the northeast squinch is underscored by its anticipation in both of the other 'classic' Middle Byzantine churches, Hosios Loukas and the Nea Moni, the only instance where the three churches correspond in their squinch decoration.[40] In addition, the scene is arranged so that Gabriel moves from left to right; in effect, the archangel progresses toward the apse, while Mary is closer to the central heart of the interior. Gabriel's greeting to Mary transverses the hollow carved out by the curvature of the squinch, moving across space shared by the congregation, and thereby allowing worshippers to participate in – to inhabit, in effect – the message of Christ's incarnation, which is, for believers, the essence of the Christian faith.[41] Once again, but in a different way this time, the architecture plays a significant role in the construction of the meaning of the mosaic.

The Nativity of Christ follows, in the other eastern squinch, on the southeast (Figure 5.6). On entering the church and looking up, the viewer

[38] M. Cunningham (trans.), *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008), 24–6, quotation at 25.

[39] Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, 24–5.

[40] Compare the plans in Diez and Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics*, at the beginning of the plates (unpaginated). The Annunciation at Hosios Loukas has been destroyed but in the early years of the twentieth century still retained a later painted replacement that 'follows the original mosaic in its composition' (ibid., 47); the scene is badly damaged at the Nea Moni, with only the lower half of Gabriel (on the left, as at Daphni) preserved: Mouriki, *Nea Moni*, pls. 14, 142.

[41] On the use of space in the church, see the preliminary remarks of Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, 24–5, 35.

sees the Annunciation on the left (northeastern) squinch, followed by the Nativity on the right (southeastern) squinch. If that viewer then rotates clockwise, s/he sees the Baptism of Christ on the southwest squinch and the Transfiguration on the northwest squinch. As at both Hosios Loukas and the Nea Moni (but less commonly elsewhere), and rotating from northeast to northwest to southwest to southeast, the cycle of images is arranged chronologically rather than liturgically.[42] The location of Christ's Nativity in the southeast squinch was anticipated at Hosios Loukas, while at the Nea Moni the unusual layout of the scenes below the central dome pushed the scene directly over the apse, onto a flat panel that, before its destruction, further emphasised the importance of the episode, which was framed by the Annunciation in the northeast squinch and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple in the southeast squinch.[43]

In all three churches, then, Christ's Nativity occupied a prime location in the decorative programme. And, at Daphni, this location also continued the theme of successful conception and childbirth initiated in the south arm of the narthex with the scenes of Anna, Joachim and the child Mary in the Temple. After passing these scenes, worshippers moved across an inner narthex before entering the church itself through a door that directly faced a portrayal of a second successful childbirth, the Nativity of Christ. Mary's importance in both of these narratives is obvious, but is also brought out by the squinch composition. The composition at the Nea Moni has been lost, as noted in the previous paragraph, but it is instructive to compare the scenes preserved at Daphni (Figure 5.6) and at Hosios Loukas (Figure 5.7).[44] In both cases, the swaddled Christ lies in a raised masonry trough (marble at Daphni, brick at Hosios Loukas) set before a cave, with the ox and ass peering at the child. Behind the cave, and extending to the right, both versions show an angel announcing Christ's birth to shepherds tending their flocks – and in both cases, one shepherd rests on one leg and leans on his crook, suggesting that at some point in their genealogies the two compositions have a shared source. Both include the seated figure of Joseph, and a symmetrical pair of angels behind the cave gesturing toward the Christ Child; both apparently once incorporated the midwives bathing

[42] On this aspect of the Nea Moni, see Maguire, 'Mosaics', and Ousterhout, 'Originality'. The liturgical order, following the Byzantine calendar with 1 September as the first day of the year, is Nativity (25 December), Baptism (6 January), Annunciation (25 March), Transfiguration (6 August).

[43] For the scene itself, see Mouriki, *Nea Moni*, 48; for discussion of the significance of this unusual arrangement, see Maguire, 'Mosaics'.

[44] For a comparison with a quite different emphasis, see Diez and Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics*, 49–54.

Figure 5.7 Hosios Loukas, Nativity of Christ (photo: Josephine Powell Photograph, GR.2–80. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University).

Christ, though only a floating strand of the midwife's hair-kerchief remains at Daphni, where the left third of the image is missing.

But the differences are equally striking. The fragmentary ribbon of the midwife's head covering, and the presence of a separate scene of the Adoration of the Magi elsewhere in the church, indicates that the three kings never appeared in the Nativity composition at Daphni; in contrast, they stand offering gifts to the far left at Hosios Loukas. Their absence at Daphni allowed a more expansive layout, but the critical difference between the two squinches is compositional: the Daphni scene is balanced on either side of the central axis; the weight of the Hosios Loukas scene has been shifted to the left, as is clearly indicated by the rays of light descending from the central arc of heaven at the top of the squinch, which veer markedly to the left. Christ's head marks the central axis at Daphni, and he is balanced by the reclining figure of the Virgin on the left and the seated figure of Joseph on the right. In contrast, at Hosios Loukas, the central axis is occupied by Christ's lower legs and the heads of the two animals, while both the seated Virgin and the seated Joseph appear on the left. While this means that at Hosios Loukas the most important figures – Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus – are all clustered on the half

of the squinch closest to the apse, the grouping also creates a bifurcated composition, with an absence of any central focus. The balanced composition at Daphni, which shunts Joseph off to the less important side of the squinch away from the apse, has the important consequence of allowing ample room for the Virgin to recline: in counterpoise to her son, who reclines behind and facing her, she occupies considerably more space than she does in the Hosios Loukas version, and the pair of reclining figures – Mary and Jesus – nest together to create a strong central horizontal balance to the vertical pull of the three rays of light descending from heaven. This emphasis also propels the Virgin into far greater prominence than she has at Hosios Loukas. This was surely intentional, and the difference between the two versions of the scene would be especially striking if Cormack were correct in his suggestion that the same mosaic team was responsible for both programmes of decoration.[45] But whether or not that was the case, the solid foregrounding of the Virgin in the Daphni Nativity indicates once more that her importance in the church goes beyond her role as Christ's mother.

As we have just observed, the Adoration of the Magi has been separated from the Nativity of Christ and given a composition of its own: it appears in the south cross arm, on the east wall, above the mosaic of the Anastasis (Figures 5.1B, 5.8–5.9). Appropriately, as we have also just seen, the Nativity of Christ with which the scene is often associated also appears on the south side of the church, in the squinch, so the two scenes are not widely separated. In addition, the positioning of the Adoration here continues the emphasis of the south side of the church on women and successful childbirth, and this stress expands once one enters the church itself: the Adoration mirrors an earlier episode from the life of the Virgin, her birth, which is presented in the north cross arm of the main church, on the east wall, directly above the mosaic of the Crucifixion. The Adoration and Anastasis on the east wall of the south cross arm thus form a pendant to the birth of the Virgin and the Crucifixion on the east wall of the north cross arm (Figures 5.1B, 5.11–5.12). Both sets of scenes pair an incident visualising successful childbirth – with, here, the added incentive of successful childbirths that directly resulted in the salvation of Orthodox souls – with an incident picturing what one might term 'successful' demise: Christ's salvatory death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection, bringing with it the promise of eternal life for Orthodox believers.

[45] Cormack, 'Viewing the Mosaics'. As noted earlier, I am not completely convinced by this argument, but look forward to a more detailed publication of the evidence.

Figure 5.8 Daphni, Adoration of the Magi (photo: Josephine Powell Photograph, GR.3–47. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University).

The Adoration of the Magi was interpreted from late antiquity onwards as the first evidence that Gentiles believed in Christ,[46] and their veneration was originally celebrated on the feast of Epiphany ('manifestation' [of Christ's incarnation]) on 6 January, as revealed by the Adoration of the Magi, Christ's Baptism and the Miracle at Cana.[47] Though the Adoration

[46] On which see G. Parlby, 'The Origins of Marian Art: The Evolution of Marian Imagery in the Western Church until AD 431', in S. Boss (ed.), *Mary: The Complete Resource* (London: Continuum, 2007), 106–29; G. Parlby, 'The Origins of Marian Art in the Catacombs and the Problems of Identification', in C. Maunder (ed.), *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Burns & Oates, 2008), 41–56. See also the discussion of the place of the three Magi in early Christian art in Maria Lidova's Chapter 1.

[47] This is discussed in connection with Romanos' early hymn on the epiphany in J. Grosdidier de Matons (ed.), *Romanos le mélode, Hymnes*, vol. 2, SC 110 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 229. See

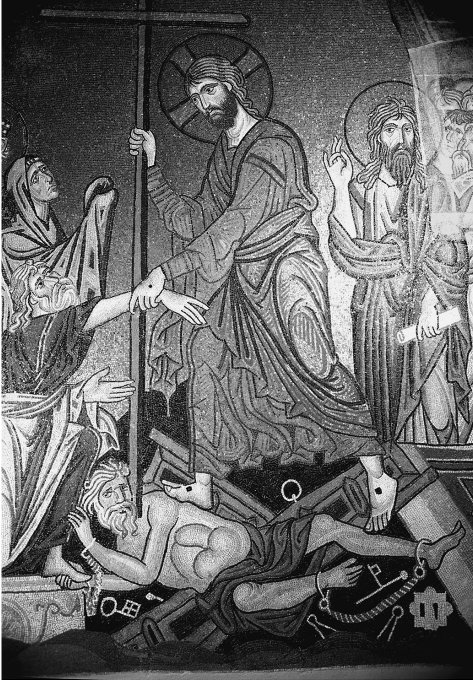

Figure 5.9 Daphni, Anastasis (photo: Makis Skiadaresis, same as Figure 5.5).

became primarily celebrated in the Orthodox church in the liturgy for 25 December,[48] in association with the Nativity, its importance for incarnational theology remains clear from hymns dedicated to the event, which, from at least the sixth century onward – for example, Romanos' first hymn on the Nativity[49] – link the Magi's recognition of Christ as saviour directly with themes of human redemption, a connection that may also help explain why the scene was so popular in the early years of Christianity and was one of the few New Testament episodes regularly depicted in the Christian catacombs.[50]

The Adoration of the Magi (Figure 5.8) and the Anastasis (Figure 5.9) are linked through their shared association with the incarnation and resultant resurrection, and through their demonstration that earthly power paid

further the discussion in the *ODB*, vol. 1, 715; and T. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 112–41.

48 The Western church, in contrast, still primarily associates the 'manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the form of the Magi' (i.e. the Adoration) with Epiphany; *ODB*, vol. 1, 465 cf. 715.

49 Romanos, *Hymn on the Nativity,* 1: Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le mélode, Hymnes,* vol. 2, 48–77.

50 See Parlby, 'Origins of Marian Art' and 'Origins of Marian Art in the Catacombs'.

homage and was subservient to the divine power of Christ. At Daphni, this link was underscored by the unusual detail of a third crown floating behind David and Solomon in the scene of the Anastasis, which seems a rather curious – and apparently unique – means of visualising a parallel with the three Magi. But there are also other, and more widely expressed, links. By the eleventh century, and probably earlier, the Adoration of the Magi and the Anastasis were joined through their association with Christ's royal, Davidic ancestry. This connection is visually obvious in the Anastasis, with its prominent portrayal of David and his son Solomon standing behind Adam and Eve, but the Adoration of the Magi was invoked in exegesis linking Christ with his Davidic, royal ancestry as well. This connection was especially stressed in connection with Anna, who is said in the *Protevangelium* to be of the tribe of David; and this lineage is repeated in, for example, the *Synaxarion* of Constantinople[51] and in countless sermons on the birth of the Virgin.[52] Anna's royal lineage was regularly invoked in Byzantine discussions of her prayer (pictured in the narthex),[53] and commentaries on Psalm 71 – dedicated by David to his son, Solomon – note its dynastic and Christological implications, in particular its allusion to Christ's incarnation and Davidic ancestry, through his mother's line.[54] Significantly, the illustrated psalter that is closest in date to Daphni, the Theodore Psalter of 1066, illustrated Psalm 71 with a portrait of the prophet Isaiah and an image of the Adoration of the Magi,[55] a clear indication both that the Davidic and incarnational interpretations of the psalm were a familiar trope at the time, and that the Adoration of the Magi was considered to be an appropriate visual vehicle for these themes.

The placement of the Adoration of the Magi thus locked into place a matrix of meanings. Its association with the Anastasis made the point that

[51] *Synaxarion* for 8 September: H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium ecclesiae constantinopolitanae*, Acta sanctorum Novembris (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1902), 26.

[52] See e.g. the sermons of Andrew of Crete, especially the sermons 'On the Nativity of Our Supremely Holy Lady, the Theotokos, with Proof that she Descends from the Seed of David' (*CPG* 8171; BHG 1080; trans. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 85–105) and 'On the Birthday of Our Wholly Unblemished Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and a Demonstration from Ancient History and from Diverse Testimonies that She is Descended from the Seed of David' (*CPG* 8172; BHG 1127; trans. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 107–22).

[53] For discussion of this association, see Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie*, vol. 1, 68–9; Panou, 'Aspects of St Anna's Cult', 96–7.

[54] On this association, see A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis, the Making of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 191–203.

[55] London, British Museum, Add.19.352, fol. 92[r]: S. Der Nersession, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du moyen age,* vol. 2, Bibliothèque des Cahiers archéologiques 5 (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1970), 38, fig. 150.

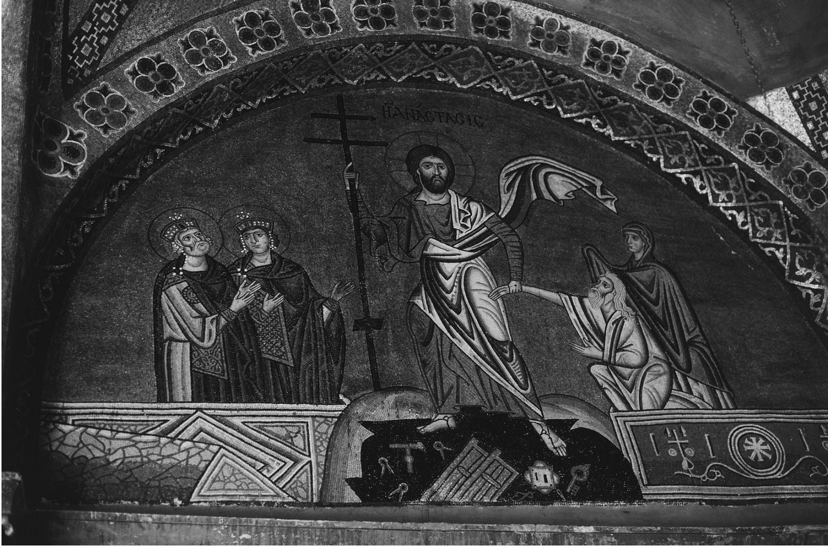

Figure 5.10 Hosios Loukas, Anastasis (photo: G. Sloen/De Agostini/Getty Images).

rulers of the earth (the Magi, Kings David and Solomon) were subservient to Christ; together, the two scenes forcefully reminded the viewer of the causal relationship between the incarnation and the resurrection. In addition, the Adoration bore witness to Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles and their acceptance of his incarnation; both the Adoration and the Anastasis reinforced Christ's association with the house of David. But beyond the nexus of meanings expressed by the alignment of the Adoration and the Anastasis, the two scenes also furthered Daphni's Marian agenda. In terms of the programmatic layout of the church, the Davidic, dynastic overtones link the south cross arm to the scenes of Anna, Joachim and the infant Mary in the south arm of the narthex; and to the Nativity of Christ in the southeastern squinch. In terms of the juxtaposition of scenes on the southeast cross arm wall, the alignment of Mary in the Adoration with Eve in the Anastasis was surely intentional: the compositions at both Hosios Loukas (Figure 5.10) and the Nea Moni locate Adam and Eve to the right of Christ;[56] among the three 'classic' Middle Byzantine churches, it is only at Daphni that the pair appear on the left, directly below their New Testament antitypes, Christ and the Virgin Mary, in the Adoration of the Magi (see Figure 5.1B).[57]

[56] For Hosios Loukas, see Diez and Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics*, pl. XIV; for the Nea Moni, see Mouriki, *Nea Moni*, 61–3, 133–9, pls. 48–57, figs. 180–9.

[57] Curiously, this distinction has not been noted in the secondary literature. The bibliography on Mary as the 'new Eve' is vast; see e.g. T. Beattie, 'Mary in Patristic Theology', in Boss, *Mary*, 75–105, esp. 86–95.

Figure 5.11 Daphni, Birth of the Virgin Mary (photo: Makis Skiadaresis, same as Figure 5.5). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

The Adoration of the Magi and the Anastasis are mirrored in the north cross arm by the scenes of the Birth of the Virgin (Figure 5.11) and the Crucifixion (Figure 5.12). Again, this was an appropriate pairing, for the Birth of the Virgin and the Crucifixion were both of great liturgical importance and formed, in Byzantine sermons, the beginning and end of the long story of salvation through the incarnation of Christ.[58] The Birth of the Virgin, celebrated on 8 September, was the subject of numerous hymns from the time of the great sixth-century hymnographer Romanos onward,[59] and in these hymns we routinely encounter links between Mary's birth and the salvation of believers through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. The concluding paragraph of Andrew of Crete's third sermon on the Birth of the Virgin (eighth-century) is indicative:

> Of such, then, is the birth of the Virgin! This is the subject of the feast: the remembrance of the covenants of God towards humanity, the proof of what was prophesied, the appearance and culmination of the hidden mystery, the visitation of the whole race in which we, who were formerly residing in darkness and in the shadow of death, were visited, and through

[58] See e.g. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie*, vol. 1, 89–91, and the series of eighth-century homilies on the Nativity of the Virgin collected in Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*.

[59] P. Maas and C. Trypanis (eds.), *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica, Cantica Genuina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 276–89.

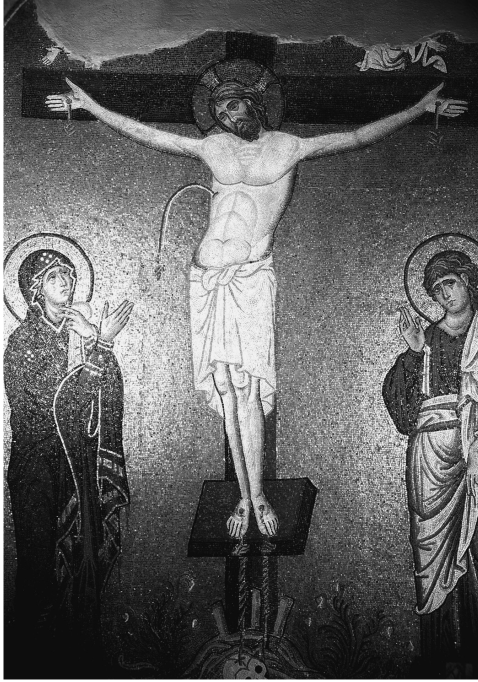

Figure 5.12 Daphni, Crucifixion of Christ (photo: Makis Skiadaresis, same as Figure 5.5).

> which we were illumined by the inaccessible light of the one who rose from on high for us; Christ Jesus, master of us all, and God the saviour, makes us arise.[60]

More succinctly, earlier in the sermon Andrew declared that, with the birth of the Virgin, 'Restoration is before the gates, redemption is at the doors, salvation is in our hands!';[61] and he returned to the theme in his fourth sermon on the Virgin's Nativity: 'For today a young girl has been born for us, from whom [will come] salvation and through whom [will emerge] the universal deliverance that is Jesus Christ our God and Word'.[62]

The theological connection between the Birth of the Virgin and the Crucifixion was sanctified by hymns (and sermons), but at Daphni the visual connection is also important. In both images, the Virgin is located at the far left of the composition, so that the infant Mary in her bath is directly above the adult Mary mourning the death of her son on the cross (see Figure 5.1B). The blood spouting from Christ's side is echoed by the water poured from an urn into the infant Mary's bath; Anna's hand gestures – with her

[60] PG 97, 860; Eng. trans. from Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 122.
[61] PG 97, 860; Eng. trans. from Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 120.
[62] PG 97, 881; Eng. trans. from Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 138.

right arm gesturing forward and her left touching her chin – are mirrored by Mary's below. None of these individual motifs is unique to Daphni,[63] but the confluence of details was surely intentional, and meant to draw the viewer's attention to the theological associations made between the two scenes.

The last narrative scene of the Marian sequence, the Koimesis (Dormition) of the Virgin, is an extensive composition that expands across the west wall above the central exit from the naos. Christ carrying his mother's soul to heaven is thus the last scene the congregation saw on leaving the main body of the church.[64] This will become the standard location for images of the Koimesis, but – although the scene itself appeared on tenth-century ivories – Daphni seems to preserve the earliest monumental example, and the first in this location, followed, shortly thereafter, by the frescoes at Asinou on Cyprus (1105/6).[65] While it is perhaps unlikely that the mosaic team responsible for the church, or whoever designed the programme, initiated the layout, it is nonetheless significant that Daphni is the earliest witness to what will become a habitual pattern of Middle and later Byzantine church decoration. If nothing else, it demonstrates how well connected and *au fait* the designer of the church was, particularly with regard to the disposition of scenes connected to the monastery's name-saint, the Theotokos.

Outside the series of scenes that provide a visual record of Mary's life, two mosaics picture her holding the infant Christ. These images, too, are carefully sited. The seated Virgin holding the Christ Child in her lap occupies the apse, as is customary from the sixth century onward in Byzantine churches.[66] When not obscured by an iconostasis, this is the central image confronting a viewer on entering the main body of the church. But even when the apse was hidden by the sanctuary screen, the pair remained visible, and still more

[63] See the comparative discussion in Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie,* vol. 1, 91–116.

[64] On the great liturgical significance of this scene, see e.g. the essays collected in M. van Esbroeck, *Aux origins de la dormition de la vierge: Etudes historiques sur les traditions orientales* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995); S. C. Mimouni, *Dormition et assomption de Marie, Histoire des traditions anciennes*, Théologie historique 98 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995); S. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); S. Shoemaker, 'The Ancient Dormition Apocrypha and the Origins of Marian Piety: Early Evidence of Marian Intercession from Late Antique Palestine', in L. Peltomaa, A. Külzer and P. Allen (eds.), *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Centuries)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015), 23–39. For English translations of the relevant early sermons, see B. Daly, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998).

[65] A. Weyl Carr and A. Nicolaïdès (eds.), *Asinou across Time: Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 2012), figs. 6.15, 6.35. 7.4, 7.6.

[66] On the apse decoration of Byzantine churches, see Spieser, 'Representation of Christ', 63–73.

approachable, as an approximately life-sized icon of the standing figure of the Virgin (probably originally holding the Christ Child) once filled the west face of the north pier of the bema (sanctuary), neatly placed below the right edge of the Annunciation squinch, facing the viewer.

The Virgin and child panel has as a pendant on the west face of the south pier a standing image of Christ. The paired images flanking the entrance to the bema/apse apparently first appeared toward the end of the ninth century, and seem to have responded to the new importance of icons as foci of veneration after Iconoclasm, as well as, often, having specifically intercessionary appeal.[67] The earliest preserved example is that at Kılıçlar in Cappadocia, usually dated to ca. 900, though here only the Virgin remains, painted on the north pier separating the central apse from the side chapel, so it is unclear with whom she was paired.[68] The formula continued at the tenth-century (?) church of the Panagia at Hosios Loukas, where, once again, only the Virgin remains (on the south pier in this instance);[69] and in the eleventh-century programme at the Church of the Dormition in Nicaea, where both the Virgin (on the north pier) and Christ (on the south pier) were preserved until the church was destroyed in the early twentieth century;[70] Daphni apparently followed shortly thereafter. This new arrangement is referred to as *proskynetaria*, meaning images to be venerated, in written accounts such as church *typika*, and the placement of Mary on one and Christ on the other side of the templon, as seen at Daphni, becomes a commonplace of Komnenian and later Orthodox church decoration.[71]

[67] On this latter aspect, and for a detailed account of *proskynetaria*, see S. Kalopissi-Verti, 'The Proskynetaria of the Templon and Narthex: Form, Imagery, Spatial Connections and Reception', in S. Gerstel (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 2006), 107–32; and her further remarks in S. Kalopissi-Verti, 'The Murals of the Narthex: The Paintings of the Late Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in Carr and Nicolaïdès, *Asinou across Time*, 115–208.

[68] Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines*, 139, pl. 88, fig. 2. Other Cappadocian churches (e.g. Direkli kilise of ca. 1000) sometimes pair Mary holding Christ with Anna holding Mary: M. Restle, *Byzantine Wall Painting in Asia Minor,* 3 vols. (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1967), schematic diagram of church LXII (Mary = C, Anna = 38); N. and M. Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce, région du Hasan Dagi* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1963), pl. 86 (Mary); L. Rodley, *Cave Monasteries of Byzantine Cappadocia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 90.

[69] M. Chatzidakis, 'L'evolution de l'icône au 11e–13e siècles et la transformation du templon', *Actes, Congrès international des études byzantines* 1 (Athens, 1979), 331–66, at 336.

[70] T. Schmit, *Die Koimesiskirche von Nikaia* (Berlin and Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1927), 43–7, pls. XXV, XXVII.

[71] The arrangement at Nicaea and Daphni was followed by a number of later churches, cited by S. Der Nersessian, 'Two Images of the Virgin in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection', *DOP* 14 (1960): 69–86, at 81–2, 85, and Kalopissi-Verti, 'Proskynetaria', 118–23. Because both were monastic churches, the siting is unlikely (though it is conceivable) to respond to the location

Conclusions

Three features characterise the programme of decoration at Daphni discussed here. First, the location of scenes was carefully considered, and was apparently integrated within a defined liturgical and devotional setting. The most important scenes were on eastern wall surfaces and, within the naos, their relation to the apsidal space was hierarchical: the most important figures were closer to the apse than less important figures. In the narthex, a different format prevailed, with the north arm apparently a place for the liturgical celebration of Holy Thursday and funerary rites (in which women played an important role,[72] which may be one reason why these were focused in the narthex where, even in a monastic church, women were normally allowed), and the south arm evidently a space for female devotion and prayer concerning conception and safe childbirth.

Second, the relationship of individual scenes to other scenes in the church was equally important. As we have seen, in some cases, and notably in the pairing of the Anastasis and the Adoration of the Magi, conventional iconography was modified in order to make strong visual links between adjacent scenes. These stress the importance of Mary in ways which have little parallel, and none from the Middle Byzantine period, making the typological link between the young Mary (her Birth and Entrance into the Temple) and the mature Mother of God (at the Nativity of Christ and the Crucifixion) the centre of the Marian narrative, while making the Eve–Mary antitype relationship uniquely clear as well.

Finally, and this is the underpinning of this chapter, Daphni is one of the earliest churches – and the earliest in the Byzantine heartland – to preserve a sequence of scenes from the life of the Virgin. As part of this programme, Daphni is also the earliest church to display the Koimesis of the Virgin in what will become its standard location, the interior west wall of the naos, over the door through which one leaves the church. It is also one of the earliest, if not the earliest, church to picture Christ and the Virgin as intercessory figures on either side of the sanctuary entrance. As a male monastic church, Daphni resoundingly negates any lingering assumptions that veneration of the Virgin was the singular preserve of women.

Christ is of course an important figure in the decorative programme at Daphni. And, presumably because it was a monastic church, there are no

of women in the church interior. The dedication to the Virgin at both Nicaea and Daphni may have prompted the arrangement, though at the Panagia at Hosios Loukas – obviously also dedicated to the Virgin – she is on the south pier, as she is at the later Chora (see n. 33 above).

[72] Women's role in funerary rites has long been noted: the bibliography is collected and discussed in e.g. Gerstel, 'Painted Sources', 100–2.

female saints other than the Virgin and her mother pictured in the decoration at all. But the importance of the Theotokos in the programme should not be understated. Daphni preserves one of the most extensive – and certainly the most expensive other than that at the much later Chora monastery in Constantinople – sequences of her life in the entire Byzantine Empire. The patron of the church, whoever that might have been, commissioned a glittering and innovative monument to the Virgin that provides an extraordinary demonstration of her importance in the Middle Byzantine period.

This is important, but even beyond that, we need to think about what Daphni tells us about the broader picture of Middle Byzantine church decoration. We are so accustomed to thinking *à la* Demus of church interiors following a broad-brush hierarchical system,[73] so brainwashed by the Vasarian insistence that all Byzantine art looks the same, and so persuaded by Byzantine authors telling us that innovation in the iconography of sacred scenes was evidence of the devil's work,[74] that it is easy to overlook telling details. But it is precisely because Orthodox image theory required stable iconographic formulae that it *must* be the details within an image, and the particular juxtapositions of scenes selected by the designer of the monument, that make particular points and individualise and personalise the decoration of a building (or, indeed, a work in any other medium).

At Daphni, the distinctive details are conveyed through iconographical variation (such as the relocation of Eve in the Anastasis to align her with the Virgin in the Adoration of the Magi) and iconographic details (such as the third king behind David and Solomon in the Anastasis). But they are even more forcefully displayed through the careful siting of the mosaics in strategic locations in the church. Daphni probably did not have the imperial founders and patrons documented at the Nea Moni, and it is also entirely possible that its patrons did not have the resources which were available at Hosios Loukas (although mosaics like these would have required considerable resources anywhere), but it was clearly innovative and theologically complex in its articulation of Marian themes and in its image/architecture relationship. It highlights the intellectual ambition of high-end church decoration in eleventh-century Byzantium, and demonstrates that this extended into 'provincial' locales. And, in particular, at Daphni, the interplay between architecture and mosaic is a prime maker of meaning; it is time to examine other Middle Byzantine churches to determine the extent to which this is true for them, too.

[73] Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, esp. 3–39.

[74] There are many examples, some of which are discussed in a different context in my *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 39–40.

Table A5.1. Infancy of the Virgin scenes at Kızıl Çukur, Chapel of Joachim and Anna (*ca* 900?), Kiev, Sta Sofia (*ca* 1050) and Daphni (*ca* 1080)

	Offerings refused	Reproach of Anna	Anna's prayer	Annun-ciation to Anna	Joachim & shepherds	Annun-ciation to Joachim	Meeting of Anna & Joachim	Concept-tion of Virgin	Nativity of Virgin	First steps	Introduc-tion to priests	Presenta-tion in the temple	Mary fed by angel	Marriage of Mary & Joseph
Kızıl Çukur	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Kiev			X		X		X		X		X	X	X	
Daphni				X		X			X		X	X	X	

Of the remaining twelve scenes spread across the three sequences, seven appear in only one of the monuments. Kızıl Çukur and Kiev both depict one scene not found at Daphni (the meeting of Joachim and Anna); Kiev and Daphni include only a single scene that does not appear at Kızıl Çukur (Mary's introduction to the priests in the temple); while Kızıl Çukur and Daphni share three scenes lacking from Kiev (the Annunciation to Anna, the Annunciation to Joachim, and Mary fed by an angel).

PART II

Song and Celebration: Festal Hymnography on the Theotokos

6 The Dialogue of Annunciation

Germanos of Constantinople versus Romanos the Melode

THOMAS ARENTZEN

The story of the Annunciation (Lk 1:26–38) inspired a flourishing tradition of homiletic and hymnographic literature in early Christianity. A recurring feature of this strand was the portrayal of characters through dialogue.[1] The authors explored the theme of the feast by developing the conversation between Gabriel and the Virgin, or they displayed a verbal interchange between Mary and Joseph. The tradition that treats the Annunciation *dialogically* is rich, which is not so surprising since that is how the Gospel of Luke first dramatised it. A number of late ancient and Byzantine works, written by or attributed to such authors as Proclus of Constantinople and Sophronios of Jerusalem – not to forget poetry like the *Akathistos Hymn* and the *Kanon of the Annunciation* – devoted themselves to the dramatic interaction between the characters at this foundational event.[2] Several Syriac dialogue poems in a similar manner made the Annunciation, the beginning of the Christian gospel, into a liturgical dialogue.[3] The earliest signs of this convention predate the 25 March feast of the Annunciation, at a time when the story of Gabriel visiting the Virgin was liturgically connected to the pre-Nativity celebrations in December. The separate feast of the Annunciation in March seems to have originated in Constantinople in the sixth century, during the reign of Justinian I (527–65).[4] From the outset, this new spring festival celebrated the Mother of God.

[1] For this tradition, see P. Allen, 'Portrayals of Mary in Greek Homiletic Literature (6th–7th Centuries)', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 69–88; M. B. Cunningham, 'Dramatic Device or Didactic Tool? The Function of Dialogue in Byzantine Preaching', in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 101–13.

[2] One example is (ps-) Proclus, *Homily 6* (*CPG* 5805), which includes dialogues between Mary and Gabriel as well as between Mary and Joseph. For more details, see Cunningham, 'Dramatic Device', 110, n. 31.

[3] See e.g. S. P. Brock, *Mary and Joseph, and Other Dialogue Poems on Mary* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2011).

[4] P. F. Bradshaw and M. E. Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts, and Seasons in Early Christianity* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 205–6.

In this chapter we shall look at two prominent works in the tradition of liturgical compositions for the Constantinopolitan festival of the Annunciation:[5] The first is the sixth-century *On the Annunciation* by Romanos the Melode (ca. 490–560), the most outstanding poet of the Constantinopolitan rite in Late Antiquity. His long and dramatic song (kontakion) remains the oldest known Greek hymn written for the feast itself.[6] The second work comes from the hand of Germanos I (ca. 650–742), who led the church of Constantinople as patriarch between the years 715 and 730. He probably wrote his homily *On the Annunciation* in the eighth century.[7]

[5] M. B. Cunningham, 'The Reception of Romanos in Middle Byzantine Homiletics and Hymnography', *DOP* 62 (2008): 255–6.

[6] J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 243. Ignazio Calabuig says that the 25 March feast was first celebrated in the year 550, and he thinks that Romanos' hymn was written that same year; Calabuig, 'The Liturgical Cult of Mary in the East and West', in A. J. Chupungco (ed.), *Handbook for Liturgical Studies: Liturgical Time and Space* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), vol. 5, 256; cf. also R. A. Fletcher, 'Three Early Byzantine Hymns and their Place in the Liturgy of the Church of Constantinople', *BZ* 51 (1958): 53–65. For an introduction to Romanos' hymn and French and English translations respectively, see Grosdidier de Matons' French edition, *Romanos le Mélode: Hymnes*, vol. 2, SC 110 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 13–41, and T. Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 46–86, 175–87. For dialogue and senses in Romanos, see G. Frank 'Dialogue and Deliberation: The Sensory Self in the Hymns of Romanos the Melodist', in D. Brakke, M. Satlow and S. Weitzman (eds.), *Religion and the Self in Antiquity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 163–79. For two recent and very useful treatments of Romanos' poetry more broadly, see S. Gador-Whyte, *Theology and Poetry in Early Byzantium: The Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); D. Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 29–65 et passim. The numbering of kontakia in the present chapter follows the critical edition of P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis, *Sancti Melodi cantica: Cantica genuina* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). The English translations of Romanos are my own.

[7] For an introduction to Germanos and his works, see A. Kazhdan (with L. F. Sherry and C. Angelidi), *A History of Byzantine Literature I: 650–850* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation Institute for Byzantine Research, 1999), 55–73; L. Lamza, *Patriarch Germanos I. von Konstantinopel (715–730): Versuch einer endgültigen chronologischen Fixierung des Lebens und Wirkens des Patriarchen* (Würzburg: Augstinus-Verlag, 1975); M. B. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008), 38–41; I quote the English translation of the *Homily on the Annunciation* from Cunningham's work, with minor adjustments; I also follow her numbering and give the page number from the edition in parentheses. I use the edition of D. Fecioru, 'Un nou gen de predică în omiletica ortodoxă', *BOR* 64 (1946): 65–91, 180–92, 386–96. See also G. E. Roth, *Paradox beyond Nature: An Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Dialogue on the Marian Homilies of Germanos I, Patriarch of Constantinople (715–730)* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse 2012), 127–73. For Germanos' *Homily on the Dormition I*, I use B. J. Daley's translation and adapt his numbering from *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998); the Greek text is from PG. Mary Cunningham is currently working on a new edition of Germanos' Annunciation homily. I am profoundly grateful to her for sharing her documents,

Both of these texts are exceptional in many ways: first, they both stage the Annunciation as *two* dialogues, one between Gabriel and Mary, and one between Joseph and Mary.[8] The dialogues do not simply make up interpolations or illustrations, but form the main narrative body of the texts. Secondly, both texts can with reasonable certainty be connected to a known and dateable author, and these men both seem to have composed their liturgical texts for the spring festival of the Annunciation.[9] It is feasible, therefore, to read their texts as two distinct examples of the Constantinopolitan Annunciation celebrations, for the two authors were primarily situated in the capital and loomed among the city's most distinguished liturgical writers.

It has been suggested that Germanos' treatment of the Annunciation theme was highly original compared to that of Romanos.[10] In the first part of this chapter I explore the similarities between the two authors' dialogues in some detail. And is it really true that Romanos' kontakion 'does not possess the dynamism of the sermon of Germanos' and that his hymn 'avoids the mundane'?[11] I shall revisit this question as I turn to the dissimilarities, the instances when the patriarch deviates from the Melode. Comparing the two narratives from a Marian perspective, I attempt to understand in what directions Germanos pulls the Constantinopolitan Annunciation narrative.

The Dynamics of Dialogue

But first, why does dialogue matter in this context – is literary conversation not just one way to tell a story? Yes, dialogue is a powerful literary device of

notes, insights and thoughts on the manuscripts with me. The present chapter takes its cue from her 'call for further studies of Romanos the Melode's influence on post-sixth-century' liturgical literature (Cunningham, 'Reception', 259), and my attempted examination of the reception of Romanos-themes in more detail here is deeply indebted to her scholarship.

8 The same has surely been true of other works as well; one example might be pseudo-Proclus of Constantinople's insufficiently studied *Homily* 6 (*CPG* 5805); ed. in F. J. Leroy, *L'homilétique de Proclus de Constantinople: Tradition manuscrite, inédits, études connexes*, ST 247 (Rome: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1967), 273–327.

9 I am not aware that anyone has suggested a different authorship for either of the compositions. While most manuscripts ascribe the homily to Germanos, it is sometimes attributed to the seventh-century bishop Leontios of Neapolis. Among the nine manuscripts that date from the fourteenth century or earlier, a couple name 'Leontios' as author, and one names 'Leontios of Neapolis' (Cod. Ambrosiana C 92 sup. [N155/ gr. 192] ff. 303–9), but I shall proceed with the assumption that the homily is written by Germanos.

10 Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, vol. 1, 64. Other scholars have noticed similarities; see esp. Cunningham, 'Reception', 256–7.

11 Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, vol. 1, 63.

characterisation. By this means, the voice characterises the speaker.[12] The Byzantine literati employed the term '*ethopoiia*' to refer to the literary technique of characterisation through imitated speech. How people articulate themselves, their tone and their style, reveals not who they are in any essentialist way, but it shows how they perform their selves in a particular situation or in relation to a specific other. In societies more hierarchical than our own, managing the skill of hierarchical speech is crucial.

Moreover, voices enact the verbal presence of a character; when the literary work is performed, the listener hears the immediate manifestation of the persona through the utterances. Vivid dialogues have the potential of turning liturgical texts into exciting imaginary dramas. The Byzantines were well aware of this effect, and liturgical writers used the terms 'drama' or 'theatre' to refer to events in church.[13] Dialogue, then, makes a text interact with its audience in a more engaging way. While many sermons may consist of clerical teaching, dialogue presupposes a form of narrative setting and opens up the floor for a greater variety of interpretations. Shadows of sacred vocal presence flicker across liturgical space.

Yet dialogue amounts to more than a mere dramatic device. The Russian literary philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, whose whole thought world revolves around the idea of dialogue, describes the semantics of words or utterances as dialogic:

> The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way.[14]

Far from being static, the word always issues from a dialogue with what it is not. Similarly, a characterisation of the Virgin through dialogue involves forming her in dynamic interaction with otherness. To construct sacred persons as dialogue partners entails construing them in relation to the alien world, and hence dialogues make plain the on-going process of renegotiation, which allows for an ever-shifting religious landscape. Literary dialogues show characters that evolve and change. Even about

[12] See e.g. B. Thomas, 'Dialogue', in D. Herman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80–93.

[13] See e.g. Basil of Seleucia, *Homily on Lazarus* 1; ed. M. B. Cunningham, 'Basil of Seleucia's Homily on Lazarus: A New Edition (BHG 2225)', *AB* 104 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1986): 161–84.

[14] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in M. Holquist (ed.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 279. For a Bakhtinian reading of a hymn by Romanos, see G. W. Dobrov, 'A Dialogue with Death: Ritual Lament and the θρῆνος Θεοτόκου of Romanos Melodos', *GRBS* 35 (1994): 385–405.

a dogmatically sanctioned word like 'theotokos' one may say that it is dialogically constructed, not only in the sense that it (as any other word) receives its meaning from other words in the semiotic play of language, but also in the sense that it creates a morphological dialogue between divine and human, between the created condition and the Creator, in what theologians call *communicatio idiomatum*. Yet the concrete staging of dialogues as a literary expression crystallises in a more tangible form the unfathomableness of Mary – or any other person for that matter – and unobtrusively admits to the impossibility of defining her squarely within the hedges of an unnegotiable semantic field.

Both Romanos and Germanos chose to characterise the Virgin in a dialogic way; additionally, the narrative action into which they placed her contributed to the vitality of their portrayals. Alexander Kazhdan describes another Marian homily by Germanos, namely *On the Presentation I*, saying:

> The sermon begins not as a theological discourse but as an introduction to earthly festivity. And not only its beginning is full of action; the movement continues. After the praise of the Virgin, Germanos again puts everything in motion: Mary's parents offer her to God; she is led into the Temple; she walks straight forward; Anna and her spouse enter the Temple with their daughter and the doors are flung open. Later on, Zacharias' speech is full of verbs of action: peep out, enter, approach, march, ascend.[15]

The characters appear in a sweep of motion. Dialogues create a different yet comparable kind of motion. Hence the two authors shaped Marian characters that never kept calm and therefore avoided being captured in stills.

Servants of the Mother of God

Despite their obvious differences, and although more than a century separated them, the two ecclesiastical men shared several common features and interests. Important in our context is the accumulation of Marian themes in both authors. One such theme concerns their authorial self-performances.[16] A well-known story relates how Romanos received his poetic inspiration directly from the hand of the Virgin in the form of a scroll.

[15] Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature,* vol. 1, 60.

[16] For the construction of Byzantine authorial selves, see D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); for liturgical selves, see Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects*.

Posterity came, in other words, to view Romanos as an author filled with inspiration from the Theotokos, someone who did his writing as *her* servant. This is, to be sure, a later legend; yet it is arguably rooted in the liturgical language of Romanos and his sense of serving the Virgin.[17] In the kontakion, *On Mary at the Cross*, he let Christ exclaim to his mother: 'Address those in the bridal chamber [i.e. in church] as your servants (δούλους), for everyone will respond to you and come tremblingly!'[18] The exact same idea – that the church assembly is made up of attentive servants of the Mother of God – surfaces just as explicitly in Germanos. In his case, however, it is also used to describe the authorial first person singular. Germanos opens his first homily *On the Dormition* by calling himself a servant (δοῦλος) of the Mother of God, and then he broadens the notion of being Marian servants to embrace the whole church.[19] Addressing Mary he says: 'All of us hear your voice, and all of our voices come to your attentive ears … For there is no barrier … between yourself and your servants.'[20] Both Romanos and Germanos encouraged their congregations to imagine themselves as devout servants in the Lady's house. Being Christian in Constantinople meant ministering to the Virgin.

The poetic corpus from the sixth century and the homiletic writings of Patriarch Germanos reveal resemblances in the details of Marian imagery; for instance they both employed the relatively obscure 'mountain of God' from the LXX Psalm verse 67:16 as a metaphor for the Virgin.[21] The verse may be translated 'God's mountain is an abounding mountain, a curdled mountain, an abounding mountain'. Romanos treats this as an image of the curdling process through which the fluidity of Mary's womb turns into the body mass of Jesus Christ. Germanos is less explicit, but seems to be referencing the same Psalm verse.[22] The Mother of God is the peak of accumulation, a hill which overflows and reproduces and regenerates.

Both authors ascribed an intrinsic role in the salvific process to the Virgin; they used the preposition *dia* to express how salvation came about *through* her: In Romanos' second kontakion *On the Nativity*, the ancestors Adam and Eve are ailing in Hades, and they beg to be saved from their fate. The

17 Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song*, 1–45.

18 Romanos, *On Mary at the Cross* (XIX) 5.7–8.

19 Germanos, *On the Dormition I* 1 (PG 98, 340).

20 Ibid., 5 (PG 98, 344–5).

21 Romanos, *Mary at the Cross* 6; Germanos, *Annunciation* 3 (71).

22 For this image, see E. Lash, 'Mary in Eastern Church Literature', in A. Stacpoole (ed.), *Mary in Doctrine and Devotion* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1990), 70–1; Lash points out that even though Romanos may be the first to use this image, others used it after him. The example Lash gives, however, is from Joseph the Hymnographer (ninth century).

Virgin Mary then insists that the Son must deliver them. Yes, says Christ to his mother, 'through you I save them (διὰ σοῦ σῴζω αὐτούς)'.[23] God saves the humans *through* the Theotokos. Germanos adapted a very similar language when he asserted that 'no one is saved but through you (οὐδεὶς ὁ σωζόμενος, εἰ μὴ διὰ σοῦ)'. The eighth-century patriarch typically expanded on what Romanos merely summed up in shorter sentences, so also in this instance he continued: 'no one is free of danger but through you, Virgin Mother; no one is redeemed but through you, Mother of God; no one ever receives mercy gratuitously except through you'.[24] Emphasising the relational aspect of his character, Romanos mastered a developed language of Marian intercession and protection of the human realm.[25] The same can be said of Germanos, who – in contrast to his contemporary bishop-preacher Andrew of Crete (ca. 660–740) – focused on the role of Mary as a relational person to whom his Constantinopolitan audience could turn, rather than her functional involvement in the mystery of the incarnation.[26]

Both Germanos and Romanos addressed their listeners in what has been called an 'elevated *koine*' or a '"literary" koine'.[27] Although the question concerning what kind of Greek these prolific writers used seems to matter less in a Mariological context, it need not be entirely unimportant. Their language was rhetorically skilled, polished and admirable, yet at the same time it was comprehensible for a general public.[28] The two compositions on the Annunciation show how dramatic this liturgical literature at times could be – so dramatic, in fact, that modern scholars have been tempted to view

[23] Romanos, *Second Hymn on the Nativity of Christ* (II) 13.4.

[24] Germanos, *Dormition I* 8 (PG 98, 349).

[25] Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song*, 120–63.

[26] Cunningham, 'Dramatic Device', 111–12; Cunningham, 'Mary as Intercessor in Constantinople during the Iconoclast Period: The Textual Evidence', in L. M. Peltomaa, A. Külzer and P. Allen (eds.), *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Century)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015), 142–5; cf. Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, vol. 1, 61.

[27] Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 39; Maas–Trypanis, *Cantica*, xviii.

[28] There is obviously no way of knowing exactly how audiences experienced these liturgical compositions, but Pauline Allen and Cornelis Datema have studied Leontios the Presbyter's sixth-century homilies – which share several traits with Romanos' and Germanos' works – in order to determine what kind of audience he composed them for. They conclude that since Leontios' corpus cannot be 'called either intellectual or demanding, and it is seemingly intended as much to entertain as to edify', it points 'to the simplicity of his hearers', and the congregation must have included workers, artisans and generally economically underprivileged people; Allen and Datema, 'Leontius, Presbyter of Constantinople: An Edifying Entertainer', *Parergon* 6.2 (1988); 5; cf. P. Allen, 'The Sixth-Century Greek Homily: A Re-assessment', in M. Cunningham and P. Allen (eds.), *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 220. See also Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song*, 1–45.

both Romanos' and Germanos' works as witnesses to a form of Byzantine liturgical drama.[29] Although the texts were probably not performed by actors as staged dramas, they would have had – and still have – a capacity to project a very lively image of the Virgin into the minds of the faithful.

A Shared Tradition

If we move to the particular Annunciation texts, what makes these two compositions comparable? The authors certainly do not write in the same genre, nor does Germanos in general copy his forerunner's terminology. The structures of their dramas do, on the other hand, show conspicuously parallel traits:

The first part of each composition consists of introductory laudations, including repeated *chairetismoi* or lines of praise to the Virgin introduced by the phrase 'hail!' (*chaire*). Both comprise an exhortation to all peoples and ranks to praise and celebrate Mary, the 'Empress'. Romanos writes:

> it is fitting not only for the general to greet the Empress
> […]
> whom all peoples call blessed as Mother of God and shout:
> 'Hail, inviolate one, hail, maiden divinely called,
> hail, sublime one, hail, delightful, hail, fair one,
> hail, beautiful, hail, unsown one, hail, unspoiled,
> […]
> *hail, unwedded bride!*'[30]

Germanos' version features several corresponding characteristics:

> Let us, all peoples … now celebrate … and let us with all zeal
> weave divine hymns for the Empress.
> […]
> Hail, favoured one, all-golden and wholly unblemished beauty!
> […]
> Hail, favoured one, blameless and unmarried maiden![31]

[29] See G. La Piana, *Le rappresentazioni sacre nella letteratura bizantina dalle origini al sec. IX, con rapporti al teatro sacro d'Occidente* (Grottaferrata: Tipografia italo-orientale S. Nilo, 1912), 43–4, 99–127, 313–23; for a recent approach to the drama of Romanos, see U. H. Eriksen, 'Drama in the Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist: A Narratological Analysis of Four Kontakia' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Aarhus University, 2013).

[30] Romanos, *On the Annunciation* (XXXVI) 1.

[31] Germanos, *Annunciation* 1 (65) and 3 (69).

Both texts are strung together by the use of acrostics. As we see in the excerpts, both alternate between the royal empress-language and the language of a beautiful and erotically attractive unmarried girl (κόρη).[32] The Greek wording in these passages is not necessarily identical; while Romanos calls Mary 'unwedded' (ἀνύμφευτος) and Gabriel a 'commander-in-chief' (ἀρχιστράτηγος), for instance, Germanos uses the term 'unmarried' (ἀθαλάμευτος) to denote the maiden, and 'commander (of a corps)' (ταξιάρχης) for the angel.[33] Both texts are explicit about the staggering appearance of the angelic officer, and they both entertain the notion that Gabriel comes as a general to greet the empress, and both exhort 'us' to follow him to her.[34]

These introductory salutations and exhortations constitute the first part of both compositions. The second part consists of a dialogue between Mary and Gabriel. A dialogue between Mary and Joseph make up the third part.[35]

The two texts share, in other words, a strikingly similar structure. Both works portray the Virgin through her dialogue with two different persons: first with the angel Gabriel and then with her betrothed Joseph.

Of course, some of these traits are relatively common in Marian literature. Already the Gospel of Luke constructed the moment of Christ's conception as a hidden dialogue between male and female.[36] Yet these two liturgical texts share some remarkable features. In both compositions Gabriel tries to escape Mary's verbal challenges by arguing that he should really be venerating her, which is to say, she is the Mother of God and he wants her to understand what he understands.[37] Both works use the Marian epithet 'Mother and Nurse of our lives'; Germanos repeats Romanos' phrase with

[32] Romanos, *Annunciation* 1.6; Germanos, *Annunciation* 2 (66). For the erotic theme in Romanos' text, see T. Arentzen, '"Your virginity shines": The Attraction of the Virgin in the *Annunciation Hymn* by Romanos', *SP* 68 (2013), 125–32; for the beauty motif in Germanos' composition, see N. Tsironis, 'Emotion and the Senses in Marian Homilies of the Middle Byzantine Period', in Brubaker and Cunningham, *Cult of the Mother of God*, 190; cf. also Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, vol. 1, 63 ('the sexual overtone of the meeting is clear throughout the conversation' in Germanos' homily on the Annunciation.)

[33] Romanos, *Annunciation* refrain and 2; Germanos, *Annunciation* 3 (69) and 2 (67).

[34] Romanos, *Annunciation* 2; Germanos, *Annunciation* 2–3 (67).

[35] Romanos' kontakion ends somewhat abruptly, and scholars assume that the last part of the original composition has not been transmitted in the manuscript. Another point contributing to this impression is that Germanos' two dialogues are of the same length – each character is allotted twenty-four lines. Romanos' composition lacks such symmetry; there are eleven stanzas devoted to the dialogue with Gabriel and only seven to the dialogue with Joseph.

[36] Lk 1:26–38; regarding erotic overtones in the secret encounter between the virgin and Gabriel in Luke, see M. F. Foskett, *A Virgin Conceived: Mary and Classical Representations of Virginity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 117–18.

[37] Romanos, *Annunciation* 4; Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (83).

only minor alterations. While the latter writes 'μητέρα καὶ τροφὸν τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν', the patriarch adds the word 'virgin' and says: 'μητέρα καὶ παρθένον, καὶ τροφὸν τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν'.[38] The authors play with an ambiguous language in which the phrase 'our life' can refer either to Christ, who calls himself 'life' (John 11:25; 14:6), or the life of humans more generally. In this way the Mother of God concurrently emerges as the Mother of Humans, or the Mother of Human Life. The phrase implies that the Theotokos nourishes the Creator with milk, an idea which both authors also develop in other compositions. Germanos says that Mary has 'given birth to life for us',[39] and she 'brings life and nourishes the Nourisher; she provides milk for the one who formerly caused honey to spring from a rock.'[40] In both authorships the breasts of the Virgin serve to characterise her as a relational figure who is corporeally involved with the human and divine realms.

Germanos does not quote Romanos openly, nor does his case amount to an instance of simple imitation or duplication. Yet the patriarch clearly adheres to a tradition that goes back to the Melode. The latter's construction of the Annunciation scene informed Germanos' composition, directly or indirectly. The preacher seems both conscious and confident about the fact that he brings into play language of a distinguished lineage. As a leader of the church in Constantinople he knew these songs and was able to knead them into his own dough.

Dialogues with Gabriel

Despite the similarities, there are important differences between the two works. How did Germanos utilise the same encounters and the same compositional structure to characterise Mary in a *different* way? How do the authors engage royal language in their constructions of Marian authority?

As Gabriel enters the Virgin's chamber and opens the dialogue, according to Romanos, he says 'Hail!' The sixth-century author displays to his listeners a very graceful encounter. Arriving at the humble abode, Gabriel understands that he is about to meet a simple girl who is also a very special maiden. Romanos' description resonates with the Annunciation mosaic in the Euphrasian Basilica in Poreč, which stems from the same century: The Virgin appears as an elegant maiden dressed in purple. Is she an elevated

[38] Romanos, *Annunciation* 1; Germanos, *Annunciation* 2 (67).

[39] Germanos, *Dormition I* 7 (PG 98, 349).

[40] Germanos, *Annunciation* 3 (71); for Romanos examples, see his *Annunciation* Prelude and e.g. *First Hymn on the Nativity of Christ* (I) 23.

lady or a humble girl? The tension between simplicity and the imperial allusions shimmers in the mosaic just as it does in Romanos, although there is less purple in the kontakion.[41] The Poreč stones let her cheeks blush as she moves a finger towards her red lips. Their encounter swells with an understated sensual tension, and her big eyes present a thoughtful gaze. In Romanos, she is shaken by Gabriel's 'shining appearance'[42] and looks down and considers the beautiful presence of this man in her house. 'He both stirs (ταράττει) me and spurs (θαρρύνει) me', she thinks to herself.[43] Gabriel reacts by gently blowing on her: 'The fiery one breathed [upon her] and burned up the timidity like hair.' 'Do not get agitated (πτοηθῇς)', he tells her.[44] One may detect a subtle erotic tension in the room.

Gabriel does get frustrated when she does not accept his message right away, but he treats her with dignity and respect. The poet uses her critical enquiry, in turn, to present her wisdom and insightfulness. But what really happened between the beautiful maiden and the beautiful man never becomes clear. The Virgin's own words come closest to conveying an answer, as she says, 'his form (μορφή) filled the whole chamber, and me as well; the doors were closed and he came to me'.[45] After this she is pregnant.

In Germanos there is a very different atmosphere and power dynamic: his Gabriel seems to be addressing someone who is used to accepting these sorts of messages. It is as if Gabriel is granted audience with an empress. He enters with a declaration; like a medieval herald, he promptly presents his formal words from heaven; without further introduction, he says:

> [Gabriel:] 'Hear, Glorified One; hear the secret words of the Highest One: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus." Prepare yourself, then, for the coming of Christ!'[46]

It looks as if Gabriel is simply giving Mary an order, and there is something almost pompous in his tone.[47] At least in the beginning, his appearance

[41] As Henry Maguire has pointed out, 'imperial and non-imperial elements were paradoxically combined' in this and similar Annunciation scenes from the period; see Maguire, 'The Empress and the Virgin on Display in Sixth-Century Art', in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies: London, 21–26 August* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), vol. 1, 395.

[42] Romanos, *Annunciation* 3.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 4.

[45] Ibid., 16.

[46] Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (71–3).

[47] Alexander Kazhdan has suggested that the angel speaks in a more elevated and 'heavenly' style than does the little Palestinian girl in this text (Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature,* vol. 1, 63), but I wonder whether such a reading does not miss the irony to which Kazhdan is otherwise well attuned; Mary is not portrayed as a little girl in this dialogue.

seems not to impress the empress. The most striking aspect of her reply is her condescending attitude: who is *he*? From the very outset the Virgin rejects Gabriel quite bluntly:

> [Theotokos:] 'Depart from my city and native land, boy (ἄνθρωπε)! Depart and quickly leave my chamber! Flee far from my threshold!'[48]

The word ἄνθρωπος in its vocative case was often used to address a slave or someone for whom the speaker had contempt.[49] Mary lectures Gabriel as if he were her slave. There is also, of course, an irony here, of which the listener (but not the speaker herself) is aware: Gabriel is not actually human, but an angel. As we see, however, she acts almost aggressively towards him. In her next line she says:

> [Theotokos:] 'Young man (νεανίσκε), I see the outstanding beauty of your elegant form and the splendid sight of your figure […] and I am rapidly beginning to suspect that you have come to lead me astray.'[50]

Here is a handsome young servant who attempts to seduce the queen with his beauty. The word νεάνισκος in the vocative can, just like ἄνθρωπος, be used to address a slave.[51] The Theotokos does not leave the reader in doubt; she uses this very word four times in the dialogue. About herself, on the other hand, she says 'I bear a royal appearance (χαρακτῆρα βασιλικόν) and I grew up in the palace (τὰ βασίλεια).'[52]

While *Gabriel* keeps insisting that he actually has something important to say, *she* continues to reject him. He now suggests that 'perhaps … the purple robe which you are wearing foretells (προμηνύει) the royal rank' of the child? But she replies drily, sarcastically, with a pun on the Greek words: 'Since you "reveal" (μηνύεις) this to me – and do not cease "revealing" (μηνύων) – I can tell you right away that I do not believe such glad tidings from you.'[53] Gabriel has a challenging task in many versions of the annunciation narrative, but he would probably count Germanos' version among his more difficult. Henry Maguire has in fact suggested that Germanos' Gabriel may be one antecedent of the late Byzantine 'self-conscious angel' found in for instance the Annunciation fresco of the Panagia tou Arakou church

48 Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (73).
49 LSJ, s.v. ἄνθρωπος A, 6–7.
50 Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (73).
51 LSJ s.v. νεάνισκος 2.
52 Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (89).
53 Ibid., 4 (75).

of Lagoudera (Cyprus).[54] The preacher does indeed make the angel sound stilted in his speech with the Virgin.

Mary blames Gabriel for jeopardising her reputation and her relationship with Joseph.[55] Gabriel may be an angel for all she cares, but she wants him to leave: 'Take gifts from me and depart from me!' she says.[56] He, however, continues bluntly and almost tactlessly to try to persuade her:

> [Gabriel:] 'I am puzzled, Glorified One, that you still doubt me, I who have come to you from such heights.'[57]

She replies wryly:

> [Theotokos:] 'The puzzle is your "glad tidings" … You came into my chamber unannounced and drew near to me (πλησιάσας μοι), perhaps viewing me as a simple girl (παιδίσκην) and not as a lady (δέσποιναν).'[58]

Mary's ironic tone and her choices of words here suggest that she feels abused. That he 'drew near (πλησιάσας)', as she says, may be taken to connote a sexual advance. The word παιδίσκη does not only mean a girl, but can also be used to signify a slave-girl or a prostitute. The imperial ruler has not been treated with due respect. Hence Gabriel is only worthy of sarcasm.

But the angel is insistent and says that it is not *him*, but the King, the heavenly Emperor, who will overshadow her. Gabriel also reminds her of the years that she spent in the Temple when she received nourishment from his own angelic hand. Such an argument is not found in Romanos at all, even though he knew the tradition from the *Protevangelium of James* that the Virgin spent her childhood years in the Temple and integrated that story into his narrative in the kontakion *On the Nativity of the Virgin*.[59] Yet the function and liturgical place of this hymn is uncertain since her nativity and her entrance into the Temple did not yet form festal celebrations in Romanos' time.[60] Germanos, on the other hand, wrote homilies for the feast of the Entrance, and he knew that his audience would expect the encounter between the angel and the little girl in the Temple to be a common memory. Hence his angel is able to – and must – refer to these Marian childhood

[54] H. Maguire, 'The Self-Conscious Angel: Character Study in Byzantine Paintings of the Annunciation', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), 377–92 (esp. pp. 383–4).

[55] Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (75) et passim.

[56] Ibid., 4 (79).

[57] Ibid., 4 (83).

[58] Ibid., 4 (83).

[59] *Protevangelium* 8:1; Romanos, *On the Nativity of the Virgin* (XXXV) 5.

[60] See e.g. J. Grosdidier de Matons, 'Liturgie et hymnographie: Kontakion et canon', *DOP* 34/35 (1980): 39; cf. Fr Damaskinos Olkinuora's chapter in the present volume.

memories, which were by now an established part of the Marian biography. Germanos juxtaposed the Virgin's Temple childhood and her royal dignity, suggesting a connection that is totally absent from Romanos' work.[61]

It is perhaps not surprising that at this point in Gabriel's argument, Mary gradually begins to waver. Especially as Gabriel says that the Virgin's belly already seems to be gaining weight, her persistence grows weaker.[62] The angel's words now start to convince her – or perhaps it is the evidence in her own body that affects her. Nonetheless she is afraid of the consequences of all this. What will Joseph say? And everyone else? As we shall soon see, she has good reasons to be anxious.

Finally, the Virgin and the angel end up speaking almost in unison. His last line is: 'O Virgin, agent of heavenly joy…' and she replies: 'O young man, agent of heavenly joy…'[63] Thus she gives her assent.

Dialogues with Joseph

After Gabriel has left the room, the fiancé Joseph shows up. This happens in the sixth-century kontakion as well as in the eighth-century homily. When Joseph enters the scene in Romanos' version, it is as a confused man. Mary herself calls for him to come:

> Then perhaps the girl summoned Joseph to herself
> and said: 'Where were you, wise man? How could you *not*
> guard my virginity?
> For someone with wings came and gave me for betrothal
> pearls for my ears;
> he hung his words like earrings on me;
> look, see how he has beautified me,
> and adorned me with this!'[64]

She starts out by blaming him for not being there when Gabriel came, for not guarding her maidenhood. How could he do this? Her tone is ironic

[61] Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (89).

[62] Ibid., 4 (85). For the issue of aural conception, see N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5; Texts and Translations* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 273–314. Neither Germanos nor Romanos seems concerned about Mary's consent; naturally it is important that she agrees to be God's servant, but it does not appear to be a prerequisite for conception. The conception takes place during the dramatic and dialogic encounter, and both texts may possibly be read as adhering to a *conceptio per aurem* tradition similar to the one Constas describes (although cf. my reservation in *The Virgin in Song*, 72–5).

[63] Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (91).

[64] Romanos, *Annunciation* 12.

when she calls him 'wise man'; it was his task to make sure no male intruder would challenge her virginity, but he did not tend to his duty. Joseph never replies to her (perhaps rhetorical) question about his whereabouts, but he starts asking his own questions – first to himself:

> [Joseph] trembled, marvelled; astonished he thought to himself:
> 'What kind of woman is this?' he said, 'she does not look as yesterday today;
> terrible and sweet appears the one who's with me, who paralyses me;
> I gaze at burning heat and snowstorm, a paradise and a furnace,
> a smoking mountain, a divine flower sprouting,
> an awesome throne, a lowly footstool.[65]

Mary has turned into a puzzling mystery in Joseph's eyes. Then he starts asking her how he shall praise her and what to call her – and he begins to venerate his own fiancée.[66] She orders him to draw nearer, and she says enigmatically: 'Come closer and hear what I am; I am what you see.'[67] The Virgin appears as a knowledgeable teacher and authority, while Joseph acts like a bewildered but obedient pupil. He is more than willing to serve her and he hesitantly agrees to testify on her behalf, although he does not really understand it all. The encounter between the Virgin and the angel may have been a complex one, but Romanos is eager to show that to humans like Joseph, the Theotokos is an incomprehensible being, a burning bush, an exalted person, and a paradoxical presence.

Germanos develops the encounter in a very different direction. Mary and Joseph first bump into one another, it seems, after she has visited Elizabeth, so the listener may conceivably imagine there to be a certain time lapse between the two dialogues.[68] In any case, the couple enters into a quarrel right away: Joseph sees that she is pregnant and immediately blames her for adultery. As in the dialogue with the angel, the tone of the conversation reflects an almost aggressive misunderstanding, and certain passages resemble a modern theatre of the absurd. Germanos presents his listener with what looks much like a realistic dialogue between a husband and a wife, when the husband suspects that she has cheated on him. At a certain point in the conversation, Joseph cites the Scriptures:

> [Joseph:] 'It has been written in the books of Moses, as follows: "And if anyone should come upon a virgin and, having forced her, should lie with

[65] Ibid., 13.
[66] Ibid., 14.
[67] Ibid., 16.
[68] Cf. Lk 1:39–56; Germanos, *Annunciation* 5 (185).

> her, that man will give the father of the young girl fifty didrachmas." What then will you do in answer to that?'[69]

Mary replies quite cleverly:

> [Theotokos:] 'It has been written in the prophets that "the sealed book will be given to a man who knows his letters and he will say, 'I am not able to read it.'" It seems to me that this prophecy was perhaps referring to you.'[70]

A frustrated Joseph exclaims:

> [Joseph:] 'Reveal the one who plotted against my house, Mary. Bring into our midst the miscreant so that I may cut off his head with my carpenter's knife!'[71]

Although Mary's line is quite daring and intelligent, there is something restrained about her behaviour in relation to Joseph. In the dialogue with Gabriel she seemed steadfast and confident. Now, all of a sudden, she feels the need to explain herself. The angel kept his distance while talking to her, she says, and she begs the angry Joseph not to throw her out of the house, for she has nowhere to go and does not know how to look after herself.[72] In order to temper his anger, she even blames herself.[73] Joseph, however, is much more concerned about the Temple and his task as a protector of this Temple virgin. Eventually, after a rather long discussion, Mary says:

> [Theotokos:] 'Now you have assailed me as if you belonged to another family and another tribe, and as an accuser; not as someone who is addressing an empress.'[74]

She is, figuratively speaking, begging him to reinstall her as ruler.

Mary's fate turns, abruptly and unexpectedly. During the course of their conversation – or the next day, it seems – Joseph comes to think of the character that came to him in a dream, the one who said that Mary would be pregnant with the Holy Spirit. Maybe this person *was* an angel after all?[75] In the end Joseph apologises, and Mary's honour is restored. She then has the final word in the dialogue: 'How great and blessed is this day!' she exclaims, with words that denote both her historical day and the day of festivities in eighth-century Constantinople.[76]

69 Germanos, *Annunciation* 5 (180).
70 Ibid., 5 (182).
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., 5 (183–4).
73 Ibid., 5 (192).
74 Ibid., 5 (190).
75 Ibid., 5 (386–8).
76 Ibid., 5 (392).

The Empress Enthroned

Late ancient festivals featured festal oratory and hymnody. The Christian Church Fathers continued this old pre-Christian tradition, so hymns and homilies came to play an important part in the cultic life of the Byzantine Church.[77] Many of the compositions employed dialogue. The two liturgical texts explored in the present chapter exemplify a persisting tendency during the spring festival of the Annunciation to craft a dialogic event. It was dialogic not only in the sense that it provided the citizens with literary dialogue in cultic texts, but also in the sense that these texts negotiated the semantic content of the celebrations themselves dialogically. It meant that the Mother of God was treated and interpreted in noticeably new ways every time. The dynamic of the dialogue could change even though the wording was not altered drastically.

The pre-Iconoclastic Constantinopolitan Annunciation tradition, as witnessed by these two important works, featured highly amusing aspects and entertaining scenes, with such elements as a daring and erotically charged extra-marital encounter and the scandalous fighting between Mary and Joseph. Romanos and Germanos both clearly belonged to this dialogic tradition, which gave priority to drama rather than mystery. Instead of fixed phrases and icons, the dramatic scenes displayed a changing Virgin in dialogic interaction with other characters.[78] Germanos resumed Romanos' characterisation of Mary as an outspoken maiden and an utterly competent disputant.[79]

Both the stories focus almost exclusively on the Virgin Mary and her role; they do not really consider what Christ will do after she has given birth to him. And although no far-reaching or definite historical conclusions can be drawn on the basis of this reading of two texts alone, it may perhaps

[77] See e.g. B. MacDougall, 'Gregory of Nazianzus and Christian Festival Rhetoric' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Brown University, 2015).

[78] Romanos' kontakion is only preserved in one manuscript, namely the kontakarion on Patmos. Such a slim transmission is not unusual for his kontakia, so perhaps we should not ascribe too much weight to the fact; however, since the same is true of Germanos' composition (although his homily is transmitted in fifty-nine manuscripts, the surviving manuscripts are late – only five or six are older than the fourteenth century) one might ask whether the dialogic nature of this literature became problematic in a later period simply because it created performative challenges? (See Cunningham, 'Reception', 256.) An alternative explanation as to why such works are poorly transmitted could be that posterity perceived them as too daring or scandalous to be used as Lenten readings – or that they conveyed too dynamic an image of the Theotokos.

[79] Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song*, 120–63.

be possible to say something about the Mariological implications of these (occasionally quite odd) stories.

A striking development is the growing prevalence of royal imagery. Judith Herrin has argued that visual images of the Virgin as empress were intolerable in Constantinople, because this would represent a challenge to the earthly empress in the Great Palace.[80] We know that motifs current in one Byzantine medium may be impermissible in another, so the empress Theotokos in homilies or hymns need not contradict Herrin's thesis entirely; however, the two texts examined here suggest that at least liturgical writers – and even a patriarch – could freely explore the royal motif. And the fact that another Constantinopolitan liturgical writer, Kassia the Hymnographer (ca. 800–860), also employed a developed royal vocabulary for Mary, suggests that such a language was gradually gaining ground.[81]

Romanos starts by showing his audience a reflection of their own festivities: the whole crowd of people is gathered around the glamorous empress. Soon, however, the drama begins, in Nazareth. From here, his characterisation moves in a relatively straight line, so at the beginning, Mary is cast as a humble maiden who speaks gracefully and reflects wisely. Through the course of the dialogue she gradually becomes less humble; slowly but surely she catches fire, like a burning bush that lights up more and more. At the end, the maiden has acquired the features of a divinised mystery. The 'neutral' position for which Romanos did not have to argue, however, was the unassuming maiden. The composition cannot be said to avoid the mundane, for the girl had to go through an erotically charged encounter with a male being before she was transformed; one can scarcely conclude that this text lacks dynamism. The dialogue reveals that Mary's relationship with Joseph was not really a relationship at all – he merely functioned as a witness. What Romanos showed his listeners was the process through which she became the Mother of God, an outstanding figure, and ceased being a simple human. The royal language, on the other hand, plays a rather modest role; it surfaces as a metaphor, but does not permeate the whole composition as it does in patriarch's homily.

In Germanos, the royal status of the Virgin is fundamental, and she is already wearing a purple robe when Gabriel arrives.[82] The whole composition brims with purple and gold. The preacher points out that Mary descends from a royal linage,[83] and he praises her saying: 'Hail, favoured

[80] J. Herrin, 'The Imperial Feminine in Byzantium', *Past and Present* 169 (2000): 15–18.

[81] Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, vol. 1, 321.

[82] Germanos, *Annunciation* 4 (75).

[83] Ibid., 3 (68–9).

one, the royal robe, purple in appearance … Hail, favoured one, forever purple, God-bearing cloud and spring eternally pouring out grace for everyone!'[84] The city of Constantinople almost turns into a heavenly city.[85] The angel addresses Mary with a certain amount of clumsy reverence, but Joseph surely does not. Yet this is an important aspect of the narrative dynamics: Germanos shows us an empress who is narratively at risk, a confronted Theotokos, one who initially has a high status, but who may be about to lose it. Gabriel is only indirectly threatening this status by his clumsy approach; it is rather the aggressive fiancé who represents danger. Although Joseph never threatens her with physical domestic violence, he does actually pull his knife. The author lets Mary move from being empress – which for him is the initial 'neutral' position – through the deadly torments and trials of Joseph's doubts, his rude accusations, and back to being restored as an honourable woman. To Germanos' audience, the Virgin Mary is by default a queen, bred by an angel in a Temple. Indirectly, the patriarch urges them to defend their great ruler, and he gives his listeners the thrilling experience of seeing a silly challenge to her royal splendour. While Romanos is enthroning an empress, Germanos is reinforcing her royal status.

84 Ibid., 3 (69–71).
85 Ibid., 3 (71).

7 Singing Mary

The Annunciation and Nativity in Romanos the Melode

GEORGIA FRANK

In Late Antique hymnography, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was remembered as a singer, of lullabies as well as lamentations, praises and prophecies. Already in the fourth century, Syriac writers brought alive her dialogues with the archangel Gabriel, Joseph, and the Magi.[1] And by the sixth century, the Greek hymnographer Romanos the Melode set her words to music in hymns composed for feasts of the Annunciation, the Nativity, Jesus' Presentation in the Temple, and the Crucifixion.[2] By endowing her with song and inviting congregations to join the refrain, Romanos made it possible for Christians in Constantinople to sing *of* Mary, *to* her, as well as *with* her. Whereas a century earlier in Constantinople, Proclus' homilies celebrated Mary's sense of hearing by which she conceived the divine Word,[3] Romanos let her voice be heard by all. Her grief resounded in the hymn, or kontakion, for Good Friday and her internal monologues would be amplified for all to hear.[4]

[1] E.g. Ephrem, *Hymns on the Nativity* 11, 16, 17; *Hymns on the Church* 36, 37, in S. Brock (trans.), *Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syriac Churches* (Kerala: St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 1994).

[2] On these developments, see A. Cameron, 'The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Religious Development and Myth-Making', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church and Mary*, Studies in Church History 39 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 1–21; and P. Allen, 'Portrayals of Mary in Greek Homiletic Literature (6th–7th Centuries)', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 69–88.

[3] N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 273–313.

[4] I adopt the Greek text of Romanos found in J. Grosdidier de Matons (ed.), *Romanos le Mélode: Hymnes,* 5 vols. (SC vols. 99 [1964], 110 [1965], 114 [1965], 128 [1967], 283 [1981]; Paris: Editions du Cerf). For first citations, I also include the number assigned by the Oxford (Oxf.) editors, P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis, *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica: Cantica genuina* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). I follow translations by J. H. Barkhuizen (trans.), *Romanos the Melodist: Poet and Preacher* (Durbanville: PostNet 2012). Mary speaks in several kontakia by Romanos: *On the Annunciation* (SC no. 9; Oxf. 36), *On the Nativity I* (SC no. 10; Oxf. 1; featuring Mary and the Magi); *On the Nativity II* (SC no. 11; Oxf. 2; with Adam and Eve at the Nativity); *On the Presentation* (SC no. 14; Oxf. 4); *On the Marriage at Cana* (SC no. 18; Oxf. 7); *Lament of the Mother of God* (SC no. 35; Oxf. 19). She also appears in a series of stichera, titled *On the Nativity IV* (SC no. 13). Romanos' French, German and Italian editors regard this work to be authentic, as does R. Stichel, 'Die musizierenden Hirten von Bethlehem', in W. Hörander

Less well understood, however, are the moments when Mary keeps silent and what moves her to break that silence. For silence and speechlessness are not always synonymous in Romanos' portrayal: beneath Mary's silence lurks a torrent of interior thoughts conveyed by Romanos. This paper traces the varieties of 'silent presence',[5] which Romanos affords Mary in kontakia on the Annunciation and the Nativity, as well as a less studied work of Romanos, a series of 33 short hymns (or *stichera*) on the Nativity. Unlike her lamentation, these earlier moments in the sacred stories reveal the voices that wrench her from meditative silence and summon forth her song.

Mary's Silence

That Romanos took interest in the Virgin Mary should come as little surprise. Like the Virgin Mary, who invoked her *tapeinosis* (lowly condition) in her song of praise in the Gospel of Luke (1:48), Romanos called himself *tapeinos* (humble) in the silent acrostics that structured three quarters of his genuine surviving kontakia.[6] Yet this shared trait did not interfere with her ability to speak. Humility did not impede boldness. For, Romanos' Mary was capable of bold and sometimes even spicy *double entendres*.[7]

The range of Mary's speech is well illustrated in Romanos' kontakion on the Annunciation. The feast prompted Romanos to engage Mary in a dense interplay of interior speech, direct speech (from the Gospel) and dialogue with the angel. In the opening strophe, Romanos invites the congregation to accompany the archangel Gabriel as he approaches the unwitting Mary, assuring the congregation that it is 'also permitted for the lowly (*tois tapeinois*) to see her and address her'.[8] As Romanos describes the scene:

and E. Trapp (eds.), *Lexicographica byzantina* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie des Wissenschaften, 1991), 249–82. The English editors consign this work to the corpus of dubious works; see P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis (eds.), *Sancti Romani Melodi: Cantica dubia* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), no. 83, pp. 164–71.

5 The phrase is borrowed from C. Dewald and R. Kitzinger, 'Speaking Silences in Herodotus and Sophocles', in C. A. Clark, E. Foster and J. P. Hallett (eds.), *Kinesis: The Ancient Depiction of Gesture, Motion, and Emotion: Essays for Donald Lateiner* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 86–102, esp. 93.

6 In the SC edition, nos. 1, 4, 8–11, 13, 15–21, 24, 26, 27, 29–31, 33–5, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 48–54, of the fifty-six hymns.

7 T. Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 63–75.

8 Romanos, *Annunciation* 9.1.4 (SC 110, 20); Barkhuizen, *Romanos*, 32; cf. 9.2.4 (SC 110, 22); cf. Lk 1:48.

> Mary's reaction to the angel's apparition was modest silence: as she inclined her head towards the ground and kept silent. And she attached thought (*noun*) to thought and brought together mind (*phrena*) to mind, calling out: 'What is this I see? What shall I make of it (*skepsomai*)?'[9]

In this depiction of Mary's reactions to the angel's words, Romanos blurs the line between speech and silence. Her silence precedes her interior thoughts, as they reach a fevered pitch, pounding inside her head. This 'cry', as we soon surmise, is internal. Comparing her thoughts to wood (*hylen logismon*) Romanos reveals the labours of Mary's mind: 'While Mary was heaping up such material of thoughts (*hylen*) in her heart (*kardia*), the fiery being [Gabriel], breathed upon her [… and] consumed her fear' in the flame.[10] His words about her imminent pregnancy do not break her silence, as the Virgin '[speaks] in her mind', paraphrasing the angel's words and questioning how he could get it all so wrong. She only asks the angel, 'How will what you say come about?'[11]

Her questions do not stop there. Declaring that she has 'now summoned courage', she peppers the angel with further questions: Is he from above or below? Is this knowledge from heaven or elsewhere? Her own boldness stuns the messenger into silence as he ponders how to handle her challenges to him and her doubts. Impatient with Gabriel's two-strophe-long deliberations, Mary interrupts his silence, 'wishing to clearly comprehend what was said, [she] cries out to the angel'.[12] Other miracles, she reasons, involved some divine intermediary. But in her case there is no 'intermediary'. Gabriel reassures her that this miracle surpasses previous ones and thereby requires no intermediary. His assurance marks a turn in her own disposition. When she realises that she is before an angel, she asks for forgiveness of her fear-driven reaction and pledges to heed his word. Thereby satisfied, Gabriel returns heavenward. The kontakion ends with a dialogue between Mary and Joseph, who begs for her protection and instruction, as she admits her own change of heart, 'And when I heard the name of the Lord, I then took a little courage and observed what I saw'.[13]

What is striking about Romanos' retelling of the Annunciation is not so much that the Virgin speaks. The Gospel of Luke had already endowed her with speech and then song. Yet, Romanos recasts her encounter with an

9 Ibid., 9.3.4–7 (SC 110, 24; Barkhuizen, *Romanos*, 32–3).

10 Ibid., 9.4.1–2 (SC 110, 24; Barkhuizen, *Romanos*, 33 and n. 161).

11 Ibid., 9.6.1 (SC 110, 26; Barkhuizen, *Romanos*, 33). Audiences would surely have recognised Mary's words from Lk 1:34: 'How will this come about?'

12 Ibid., 9.7.1 (SC 110, 28; Barkhuizen, *Romanos*, 34).

13 Ibid., 9.16.7–8 (SC 110, 38; Barkhuizen, *Romanos*, 37).

angel not just as a prelude to song (that is to say, the dialogue that precedes the Magnificat), but as the song itself. Romanos, much like a psalmist, draws in the audience to hear Mary's doubts and confusion and help her to find the courage to sing, too. And with her the audience also breaks through Gabriel's silence with bold utterance. The audience is privy to Gabriel's internal strategising, Joseph's interior bewilderment and Mary's frantic doubts and confusion.[14]

This oscillation between interior monologue and bursts of speech is not limited to the Annunciation. The first hymn on the Nativity, one of Romanos' most enduring kontakia, is set in the depths of a cave in Bethlehem, where Mary contemplates Christ by addressing words to him 'in secret'.[15] Her voice shatters that calm as she cries out to the Magi, 'Who are you?' And only after she realises the purpose of their visit does she continue this quiet discourse to her infant son, who responds by 'secretly touch[ing] his mother's mind'.[16] In addition to rendering speech in song, Romanos also provides song within song, as the kontakion closes with the shepherds singing praises.[17] That movement from the 'still, small voice'[18] spoken tenderly in secret to a buoyant chorus of shepherds guides the congregation from confusion to exultation.

A similar progression from silent fears to dynamic roar appears in the kontakion about Jesus' Presentation in the Temple, *On the Presentation*. The prologue calls on 'us mortals' to shout our 'hymn of praise'. By contrast, Mary is more demure. She is trembling and 'pondering (*dienoieto*)' in words.[19] So too, Symeon experiences 'joy and fear', such that he is rendered mute, if still supplicating 'in his mind (*dianoia*)' as he cries, 'Protect me and do not consume me, Fire of the Godhead!'[20] This hymn, composed for the new feast of the Presentation or 'Meeting' (*Hypapante*) of the Lord in the Temple, illustrates the tension between the exhortation to sing praises aloud about the very mute characters who mull or even cry out inwardly.

By contrast, reticence and interior monologues do not appear in what is known as the second kontakion on the Nativity. Mary's voice – more precisely, her lullabies to the infant Jesus – reach down to the depths of Hades,

[14] Ibid., 9.13–14 (SC 110, 34–6).
[15] Romanos, *Nativity I* 10.4.1 (SC 110, 54).
[16] Ibid., 10.8.2 (SC 110, 58): τῶν φρενῶν ἀφανῶς ἥψατο τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ.
[17] Ibid., 10.22.3 (SC 110, 72). On the male and female choruses in Greek drama, see C. Calame, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Function*, trans. D. Collins and J. Orion (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 77–8.
[18] Cf. 1 Kgs 19:12.
[19] Romanos, *Presentation* 14.3.3 (SC 110, 178).
[20] Ibid., 14.5.8 (SC 110, 180).

where Eve and Adam are held captive, such that she carries on an intercessory dialogue with the first couple.[21] As Thomas Arentzen observes, in this kontakion 'Mary's voice comes to mirror the descent of the Son's body'.[22] The sheer spatial range of Mary's voice also prompt us to consider its *temporal* span as well: Upon hearing Mary's sung praises, Eve cries to Adam, 'Who has sounded in my ears what I had hoped for? / A virgin giving birth to the curse's redemption … and whose childbirth has wounded him [= the Devil] who wounded me, she it is the son of Amos [Isaiah] prefigured, the rod of Jesse'.[23] In these lines, Eve charts the full course of sacred history: from God's cursing of Eve (Gen 3:16), to Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah, to wounding Satan, an anticipation of Christ's descent to hell and the resurrection.[24] As Susan Ashbrook Harvey has observed of Ephrem's (ca. 306–73) homilies, Mary can traverse sacred history and fold it into the congregation's time.[25] Like Ephrem, Romanos elides Mary's song with those who sing her words.

As the kontakia relating to Christ's Nativity reveal, Mary's inner thoughts are audible (and singable!) to (or by) the congregation. Yet, as I have suggested, *when* they erupt into dialogue and audible speech depends on affective states: fears, doubts and confusion conspire to silence Mary, whereas wonder, praise and awe let her burst forth, cry out, praise and exult. As Harvey has noted for the Syriac hymnographer Jacob of Serug, Mary's silence may be interpreted as adherence to social norms for women's speech and her utterances (and importantly the settings for that speech) a temporary transgression of those norms.[26] What I am suggesting for Romanos,

[21] Romanos, *Nativity II* 11.3.1–7 (SC 110, 90); on Adam and Eve's captivity in Hades, see R. Gounelle, *La descente du Christ aux enfers: Institutionnalisation d'une croyance* (Paris: Institut d'études Augustiniennes, 2000); on Mary's role in this drama, see L. M. Peltomaa, '"Cease Your Lamentations, I Shall Become an Advocate for You": Mary as Intercessor in Romanos' Hymnography', in L. M. Peltomaa, A. Külzer and P. Allen (eds.), *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4th–9th Century)* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie des Wissenschaften, 2015), 131–8. On Mary's lullabies in Syriac hymnography, see S. A. Harvey, *Song and Memory: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), 47, 63–4.

[22] Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song,* 124–32, esp. 132.

[23] I follow M. Alexiou's translation in *After Antiquity: Greek Language, Myth, and Metaphor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 416–29.

[24] Romanos, *The Victory of the Cross* 38.1 (Oxf. 22) (SC 128: 282–311). On this hymn, see my 'Christ's Descent to the Underworld in Ancient Ritual and Legend', in R. Daly (ed.), *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 211–26, esp. 220–5; see now U. H. Eriksen, 'Drama in the Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist: A Narratological Analysis of Four Kontakia' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Aarhus University, 2013), 206–46.

[25] On these temporal leaps in Syriac hymnography, see S. A. Harvey, 'On Mary's Voice: Gendered Words in Syriac Marian Tradition', in P. C. Miller and D. B. Martin (eds.), *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 63–86, esp. 76–7.

[26] Ibid., 79.

however, is that her speech gestates in rumination before it can be unleashed and become audible. This movement from inaudible cries to bold speech in Mary and other characters models for the congregation the emotional work in grasping the fullness of Christ's coming into the world. Such 'emotional work', neither isolates Mary nor renders her introspective or contemplative. Precisely because Mary's voice emerges late in each kontakion, the voices of others are necessary to summon forth her own. Angels and shepherds sing in anticipation of her voice, suggesting a natural reticence to sing it alone. As the final strophes of several kontakia remind us, it is up to the congregation to join in the final strophes. Angelic choirs may set the stage, but the congregational choir brings down the curtain, so to speak. A similar build-up of voices appears in another work attributed to Romanos: a series of shorter hymns, or stichera, composed for the feast of the Nativity.

The Stichera

The fourth hymn on the Nativity, as it is called by its French editor, consists of thirty-three stanzas, each comprising about five verses, with a common refrain ending each stanza: 'Blessed are you our newborn (*techtheis*) God, glory to you (*doxa soi*)'.[27] Stichera were rhythmic compositions, sung after a psalm verse (*stichos*) had been read during Orthros and Vesper services.[28] Not found in any *kontakarion* (collection of kontakia), these stichera appear in liturgical collections for December. One eleventh-century manuscript, Vallicellianus E 54, contains all the strophes in an uninterrupted series. Two other manuscripts include selections of strophes.[29] The stichera became attributed to Romanos when Cardinal Pitra identified a ninety-nine-strophe acrostic bearing the name Romanos.[30] Of these, the first letter of thirty-three consecutive strophes spell the following: ΑΙΝΟΣ ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΥ ʽΡΩΜΑΝΟΥ ΕΙΣ ΤΑ ΓΕΝΕΘΛΙΑ ('praise by [or, of] the humble Romanos for

[27] With slight variation in strophes 2 and 7.

[28] E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 243–5.

[29] Vaticanus gr. 1212 includes only strophes 1–7, whereas Vat. gr. 1531 (fifteenth–sixteenth century) includes 1–16, 22–4, dispersed in clusters, with some strophes appearing twice on separate occasions. See Grosdidier de Matons, *Hymnes,* vol. 2, SC 110, 134–5, 139.

[30] J. B. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra spicilegio Solesmensi parata* (Paris: Jouby et Roger, 1876), no. 29, vol. 1, 222–8. Acrostics spelled out a signature of sorts, easily detected by the reader, less so by the listener. See D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 169–74. The alphabetic acrostic also appears in the Akathistos Hymn to the Theotokos, once attributed to Romanos, but more likely to have been composed during the fifth century, according to L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 113–14.

the birthday feast').[31] In addition to the acrostic evidence, recent work on the history of the kanon hymn and its non-monastic uses leaves open the possibility that the Melode was capable of experimenting with stichera.[32] Although the matter of authorship cannot be settled here, the possibility that stichera and kontakia shared liturgical settings is worth exploring.

Like kontakia, stichera were composed for specific liturgical feast days. In their performance, stichera alternated with psalm verses, selected to suit the festal occasion. Yet unlike in the kontakia, there is little narrative continuity between stichera.[33] Thus, the refrain and acrostic might appear to serve as merely superficial ligatures. Yet, might repetition serve a different purpose? Could repetition be understood as a pattern that invites and unites the audience?[34]

Apart from the presence of an acrostic and a refrain ('Blessed be our newborn God, glory to you'), the stichera have little else in common with the kontakion form. Unified by a single theme – the Nativity, in this case – the Melode must invent thirty-three different ways to praise the Nativity. To do that, the stichera move through a variety of addressees: first, the angels, then, Joseph, followed by the congregation, then the Virgin. More so than any kontakion, these stichera assemble a great cloud of earthly and heavenly witnesses to the nativity. Joseph interrogates himself, as the congregation proclaims its victory over Belial, now the mute and chained tyrant. The congregation addresses the Virgin and calls upon the shepherds to exchange the pastoral flute for trumpets, and the Magi to abandon magical formulas.[35] Each exhortation is followed by the command, 'people, speak' (*laoi eipomen*), and the refrain.

Some unexpected addresses find their way in this cloud of witnesses. For instance, Belial appears, as well as 'daughters of kings' summoned to enter the joy of the Mother of God.[36] That exuberance appears in

[31] Grosdidier de Matons, *Hymnes,* vol. 2, 132–3; R. Maisano (ed. and trans.), *Cantici di Romano il Melodo*. 2 vols. (Turin: Unione Tipgraphico – Editrice Torinese, 2002), vol. II, 553; J. Koder (ed. and trans.), *Romanos Melodos, Die Hymnen*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Anton Heiersemann, 2005), vol. 1, 377. For the purposes of this chapter, I shall follow the thirty-three-strophe version.

[32] S. Frøyshov, 'Jerusalem in Constantinople: The Hagiopolites Divine Office in the imperial City', in 42nd Annual Byzantine Studies Conference Abstracts (2016) accessed: www.bsana.net/conference/archives/byabstracts.html.

[33] For this reason, Grosdidier de Matons (*Hymnes*, vol. 2, 132) regards the stichera to be formally closer to the odes of a kanon than the *oikoi* (strophes) of kontakion.

[34] As Grosdidier de Matons explains, the brevity of the stanzas undercut the Melode's ability to develop a cohesive narrative that will keep the audience's attention and result, in his opinion, in an uninteresting and 'disjointed series of short hymns' (*cette suite décousue de petits cantiques*; *Hymnes*, vol. 2, 132–3).

[35] Romanos, *Nativity IV* 13.2.1–3 (Joseph), 13.3.1–2 (victory over Belial); 13.4.1 (to the Virgin); 13.5.1–2 (to shepherds and Magi) (SC 110, 140–2).

[36] Ibid., 13.5.4 (SC 110, 140–2). On expressions of joy in Marian liturgies, see Kallistos [Ware] of Diokleia, 'The Feast of Mary's Silence: The Entry into the Temple (21 Nov)', in A. Stacpoole with

salutations: '"Greetings to you" I shall cry to the ewe-lamb, "Greetings to you," I shall cry to the Virgin'.[37] The congregation is commanded to clap hands, cry out acclamations to make up an angelic choir, cry with faith (*pistōs krazontas*) and cry out.[38] Such joy calls forth the incorporeal choirs who rejoice as Adam dances.[39] The choir of angels also raise a hymn and dance to celebrate the birth of Christ.[40] Even the cherubim join in praise.[41]

The cosmic witness to this event extends to the congregation, who is invited to join these choruses and 'ceaselessly celebrate in a hymn of praise' and sing a hymn.[42] Shepherds tell themselves to understand thoroughly the hope given by the voice.[43] And in the final two strophes, Magi blinded by the radiance cry out the refrain. Only after this choral parade, does the Virgin cry out, 'I give birth today to a son who surpasses all thought and speech'.[44] Her cry is the penultimate song, as the poem closes with the celestial armies and forces calling out a ceaseless and 'never silent' hymn (*hymnon ektene kai asigeton*).

Even if the stichera lack a narrative plot, the voices create a narrative arc, building up a host of witnesses to culminate in the Virgin's cry with the celestial multitudes (presumably enacted by the congregation) joining in the exultations. As with the kontakia discussed earlier, Mary's initial silence allows various groups to launch and heighten the celebration of Christ's Nativity. The congregation summons a sequence of witnesses, who dance, clap and sing. Yet, the final cry remains Mary's.

How are we to understand Mary's protracted silence and her delayed speech? Mary's silence puzzled poets and writers in Christian late antiquity. In the Syriac tradition, she was remembered for her bold and irrepressible speech. However much the angel Gabriel or Joseph enjoined Mary to be silent, she insisted on speaking. In large measure, Mary's speech was a counterpoint and corrective to Eve's unquestioning silence before the Serpent in the Garden of Eden. As Susan Ashbrook Harvey sees it, 'to undo the fall, a

G. and J. Pinnock (eds.), *Mary in Doctrine and Devotion: Papers of the Liverpool Congress, 1989, of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1990), 34–41.

37 Romanos, *Nativity IV* 13.9.1–2 (SC 110, 144); cf. Romanos, *Ascension* 48.13 (SC 283: 160) discussed in my 'Sensing Ascension in Early Byzantium', in C. Nesbitt and M. P. C. Jackson (eds.), *Experiencing Byzantium: Papers from the 44th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 293–309, esp. 308.

38 Romanos, *Nativity IV* 13.8.4; 13.10.5 (SC 110, 144). On liturgical acclamations, see L. S. Lieber, 'With One Voice: Elements of Acclamation in Early Jewish Liturgical Poetry', *HTR* 111 (2018): 401–24.

39 Ibid., 13.12.4 (SC 110, 146).

40 Ibid., 13.13.1–3 (SC 110, 146).

41 Ibid., 13.15.4 (SC 110, 148).

42 Ibid., 13.20.1 (SC 110, 152).

43 Ibid., 13.28.2 (SC 110, 156).

44 Ibid., 13.32.1–5 (SC 110, 158, 160).

woman was needed who would listen, question, and speak in order to initiate God's saving plan.'[45] In his retelling of the visitation between Mary and Elizabeth, Jacob of Serug (ca. 451–521) detects another contrast: whereas the women speak and understand, the men remain silent.[46] Mary did fall silent, but only after she had 'inquired, sought, investigated, [and] learned'.[47] Yet, as Harvey also notes, such bold speech is circumscribed by the setting. All the examples of Mary's speech occur somewhere beyond the male, public sphere: in an intermediary space with the angelic interlocutor, in women's space, or in her husband's home.[48] Performed in the collective space of the liturgy and sung by women's choirs, Mary's speech navigated social expectations surrounding gendered spaces.

Beyond setting, what else drives women's silence? Secrecy and deception, or even some overwhelming emotion can stifle speech.[49] Yet, it is also possible for women's silence to be expressive. As classicist Naomi Rood notes, there is an 'efficacy' to silence, which can structure action and invite possibilities.[50] Rather than regard silence as a form of concealment, it may also serve to signal mystery and ineffability precisely when words are not up to the task. In Greek tragedy, Carolyn Dewald and Rachel Kitzinger claim, 'a character's silence can make the audience aware of something that must be understood but cannot be spoken'.[51] That is to say, silence can point to a mystery beyond civic structures or human language.

This expressive power of silence poises us to rethink Mary's silence in stories of the Annunciation and Nativity. That both stories are linked to the mystery of the Incarnation is key. For Romanos her silence allowed her (and the audience) to grapple mentally with the in-breaking of this divine event. Likewise that the stichera on the Nativity notably allow packs of animals, shepherds, angels, and others to proclaim the event before Mary bursts forth in song. Thus, the Virgin remains silent, not motivated by fear or deception, but rather engrossed in deep desire to understand

[45] Harvey, 'Spoken Words, Voiced Silence: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition', *JECS* 9 (2001): 105–31, esp. 117.

[46] Jacob of Serug, *Homily 2,* in M. Hansbury (trans.), *Jacob of Serug on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998), 43–64, cited in Harvey, 'Spoken Words', 119.

[47] Jacob of Serug, *Homily 1,* in Hansbury, *Jacob of Serug*, 17–42 at p. 33, cited in Harvey, 'Spoken Words', 119.

[48] Harvey, 'Spoken Words', 120.

[49] C. Dewald and R. Kitzinger, 'Speaking Silences', 87–8, n. 4 (citing N. Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 21.)

[50] N. Rood, 'Four Silences in Sophocles' *Trachiniae', Arethusa* 43 (2010): 345–64.

[51] Dewald and Kitzinger, 'Speaking Silences', 87. On the impact of silent characters on audiences, see S. Goldhill, *Sophocles and the Language of Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 46–7.

the mystery of the Incarnation. In Dewald and Kitzinger's words, silence shields 'an interior world whose unspoken complexities change the shape of what we must take into account if we are to be fully human'.[52] The 'unspoken complexities' of the Incarnation are at the heart of Romanos' hymns to the Theotokos.[53] Sometimes silence prevails making 'space to imagine' the very mysteries words fail to express.[54] Or, in later tradition, Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) would regard Mary as the ideal contemplative hesychast, plunged in a silence that engages her in even deeper listening and presence before God.[55]

To conclude, we have surveyed the presentation of Mary's speech and song in Romanos' works on the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Presentation. Romanos' Mary was initially reticent, pondering and inaudible. By this silence, the songs of others – of angels, shepherds, Magi and cherubim – could burst forth and prepare the way for hers. It is fitting that a hymnographer known for his inaudible use of the acrostic *tapeinos* (humble) should present Mary in this way. By giving silent voice to her ruminations, Romanos electrified the tension between spoken silence and bold song.

52 Dewald and Kitzinger, 'Speaking Silences', 98.

53 What S. Brock concludes for the Syriac tradition can just as well apply to Romanos: '[Mary] is always regarded in relationship to the Incarnation, and never *in vacuo*' ('Mary in Syriac Tradition', in A. Stacpoole (ed.), *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1982), 182–91, esp. 191.

54 Dewald and Kitzinger, 'Speaking Silences', 96.

55 Kallistos (Ware), 'Feast of Mary's Silence', 39.

8 | Mary and Adam on the Threshold of Lent

Counterpoint and Intercession in a Kanon for Cheesefare Sunday

DEREK KRUEGER

A ninth-century kanon hymn, *On the Transgression of Adam*, composed for Cheesefare Sunday by an otherwise unknown Christopher, reveals a complex construction of Mary as intercessor on the threshold of Lent.[1] Christopher's poem elaborates Adam's emotional response to his exile from Paradise. Not only does the poet encourage the singer to identify with Adam, employing the interiority of the first-created human to shape a Byzantine Christian subjectivity as a sinner in need of salvation, but he also uses the kanon's *theotokia*, its verses addressing the Virgin, to present Mary as an agent in the solution to the suffering and alienation from God that characterises the human condition. In the hymn, the singer appeals to Mary to intervene precisely to remedy the sin of Adam – and sometimes also of Eve. Christopher explores both Mary's role as Theotokos or God-bearer and her subsequent intercessory power. The hymn thus reads these dual tasks of the *mediatrix* in light of the fall of the first humans.

The Constantinopolitan lectionary does not assign the reading of the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 to Cheesefare Sunday, the last day before the Great Fast. It had, however, been the custom since the early sixth century to reflect on Adam's exile from Paradise in order to frame the season of penance and cultivate compunction.[2] Christopher's kanon continued this

[1] The received text appears in *Triodion katanyktikon: Periechon apasan ten anekousan auto akolouthian tes hagias kai megales tessarakostes* (Rome: [n.p.], 1879), 102–7. For discussion of other aspects of the poem, see D. Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 186–91; Krueger, 'Beyond Eden: Placing Adam, Eve, and Humanity in Byzantine Hymns', in M. Ahuvia and A. Kocar (eds.), *Placing Ancient Texts: The Rhetorical and Ritual Use of Space* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 167–78. I have cited kanons by ode number and troparion. *On the Transgression of Adam* lacks a second ode.

[2] On the cycle of Old Testament readings in the Constantinopolitan lectionary system, see J. Miller, 'The Prophetologion: The Old Testament of Byzantine Christianity?', in P. Magdalino and R. Nelson (eds.), *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 55–76. For the possibility of a cycle of Lenten observances on Old Testament themes in the sixth century, see J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode: Hymnes*, 5 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1965–81), vol. 5, 214–17. An anonymous late fifth- or early sixth-century kontakion may originally have been written for a night vigil on the verge of Lent. See *On Adam's Lament* in P. Maas (ed.), *Frühbyzantinische Kirchenpoesie*, vol. 1: *Anonyme Hymnen des V–VI Jahrhunderts*,

liturgical focus. The conventions of the kanon hymn's genre offered opportunities to insert Mary into the story of Adam and Eve. New research on hymnals from Jerusalem that survive only in Georgian, known as the Ancient Iadgari, reveals that kanon hymns emerged in the fifth or sixth century to adorn the liturgy of Morning Prayer (*Orthros*) at the Church of the Anastasis. In time, kanons replaced a set cycle of eight or nine biblical canticles sung at Morning Prayer.[3] These new compositions keyed the hymnody to the lectionary and the liturgical cycle, reinforcing the appointed observances of the calendar. The practice spread to the capital in the seventh century, perhaps brought by Andrew of Crete (ca. 660–740), one of the form's early virtuosos. His contemporary, the patriarch Germanos (r. 715–30), also composed kanon hymns.

Each ode of the kanon had a different metrical pattern to which each of its verses, or troparia, conformed. While early kanons did not always include troparia to the Virgin at the end of each ode, by the early ninth century, it had become standard to append a verse to or about the Theotokos to each ode. To date, few have reflected on the genre of the theotokion as a repository of Marian doctrine or innovation. These troparia had the same metre and were sung to the same tune as the rest of the ode. A kanon would thus have eight or nine theotokia in as many metres and melodies.[4] These verses usually had little relation to the content of the rest of the ode, or for that matter to the whole of the kanon or the liturgical themes of the day. For example, in a hymn by Joseph the Stoudite, *On the Prodigal Son*, almost certainly composed at the Stoudios Monastery in Constantinople in the early ninth century for the third Sunday before Lent, the poet made no effort

2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1931), 16–20; trans. E. Lash, https://web.archive.org/web/20080216224125/ www.anastasis.org.uk:80/adam's_lament.htm, last accessed Sept. 2018.

[3] For the emergence and history of the kanon, see S. Frøyshov, 'Rite of Jerusalem' and 'Byzantine Rite', both in *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*, Canterbury Press, last accessed May 2016, www.hymnology.co.uk. Older studies include J. Grosdidier de Matons, 'Liturgie et hymnographie: Kontakion et canon', *DOP* 34/35 (1980–1): 31–43; A. Louth, 'Christian Hymnography from Romanos the Melodist to John Damascene', *JECS* 57 (2005): 195–206. For the broader perspective on the importance of the Ancient Iadgari, see the French résumé in E. Metreveli, C. Čankievi and L. Hevsuriani (eds.), *Udzvelesi Iadgari* (Tbilisi: Mecniereba, 1980), 930–8; A. Wade, 'The Oldest Iadgari: The Jerusalem Tropologion, V–VIII c.', *OCP* 50 (1984): 451–6; A. Wade, 'The Oldest Iadgari: The Jerusalem Tropologion – 4th to 8th Centuries, 30 Years After the Publication', in D. Atanassova and T. Chronz (eds.), *Synaxis katholike: Beiträge zu Gottesdienst und Geschichte der fünf altkirchlichen Patriarchate für Heinzgerd Brakmann zum 70. Geburtstag,* vol. 2 (Vienna: Lit-Verlag, 2014), 717–50; P. Jeffery, 'The Earliest Christian Chant Repertory Recovered: The Georgian Witnesses to Jerusalem Chant', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47 (1994): 1–38.

[4] The classic, if flawed, treatment of the kanon as a musical form is E. Wellesz, *History of Byzantine Music Hymnography*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 198–239.

to connect his theotokia to the biblical story of a reprobate son's repentance.[5] After troparia in which the singer calls on Jesus to accept him in his fatherly embrace, just as the father accepted the prodigal in the parable, the theotokion engages in a generic petition, not to Mary but to God:

> Show in me all your goodness, O God.
> As my Benefactor, overlook the multitude of my offences
> at your Mother's godly prayers.[6]

In the following ode, after the speaker imitates the biblical prodigal by calling out 'I have sinned, Father', the theotokion picks up on the theme of poverty, perhaps implicit in the concept of prodigality, but does little to integrate the Virgin into the biblical drama.

> O lovely among women, enrich me too,
> reduced to poverty by many sins, O pure one,
> with notions of what is fair and lovely, that I may glorify you.[7]

When we consider the kanons in general, we tend to observe Byzantine liturgical poets composing conventional expressions of Marian theology or generic petitions to the Mother of God in a variety of metres.[8] While most theotokia offer conventional doctrine in verse, Mary's relationship to the lection or biblical narrative appointed for the day remains unexplored or underexploited.[9]

Christopher's *On the Transgression of Adam* provides a theologically sophisticated and possibly innovative exception. Christopher weaves Mary into the fabric of his odes by echoing themes from the biblical narrative and the human predicament that they have caused. The first ode opens with the singer taking on the role of Adam and stages an internal dialogue between the 'I' and the soul.

> Come my wretched soul (Δεῦρο ψυχή μου ἀθλία), weep today over
> your deeds,

[5] Joseph the Stoudite, *On the Prodigal Son*, in *Triodion katanyktikon,* 12–16; trans. E. Lash at https://web.archive.org/web/20160308210105/ www.anastasis.org.uk/ProdigalE.htm, last accessed Feb. 2017 (all following references in the chapter are to this translation). For further discussion of this poem, see Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects*, 173–80.

[6] Joseph the Stoudite, *On the Prodigal Son* 1.4, trans. Lash.

[7] Joseph the Stoudite, *On the Prodigal Son* 3.4, trans. Lash.

[8] For theotokia of personal and collective appeal in the works of Joseph the Hymnographer and Kliment, see A. Kazhdan, 'An Oxymoron: Individual Features of a Byzantine Hymnographer', *RSBN,* n.s. 29 (1992), 38, 41 (inclusive 19–58).

[9] See Kazhdan, 'Oxymoron', 52–3, with some other examples that integrate theotokia with the 'plot' of a kanon. See also the forthcoming work of Alexander Riehle on Kliment's composition of apt theotokia for a late eighth- or early ninth-century kanon by Thekla.

> remembering how once you were stripped naked in Eden,
> cast out (ἐξεβλήθης) from delight and unending joy.[10]

Combining themes of memory, loss and lament, the verse highlights the trauma of the expulsion from Paradise. The ode's theotokion shifts from internal discourse and addresses Mary directly.

> O conceiver of God (θεοκυήτορ), Virgin, daughter of Adam by descent,
> mother of God by the grace of Christ,
> I am an exile from Eden (τὸν ἐξόριστον Ἐδέμ),
> now call me back (νῦν ἀνακάλεσαι).[11]

The poet invests Mary with the power to recall him to his origins, to restore the rupture of the fall from grace. Thus while God created Adam 'in abundant compassion and mercy' (1.2) and placed him in Paradise where he might take delight, the return to Eden would seem to depend on the Theotokos. Within the constraints of the poetic form, which requires a verse about or addressing the Virgin, the poet calls on established traditions that identify Mary's role in the salvation of humanity. At the same time, under pressure from this convention, Christopher takes on the task of envisioning Mary within the context of Adam's predicament. He reads Mary into the aftermath of Genesis 3. Moreover, the theotokion names Adam in the third person and situates the speaker in a time long after Adam, after the life and works of the Virgin, that is, in fact in the singer's Byzantine present. This raises questions about how one should hear the opening troparion in retrospect. Was this the Byzantine singer playing the role of Adam, or the Byzantine singer extending the force of Adam's lament typologically and generically for all humans? Indeed all humans are in exile from Eden and all have cause for penance. In a choral performance, as is attested for kanons from the late eighth century, each singer would take up the voice of this first person self, making the words his or her own.[12]

[10] Christopher, *On the Transgression of Adam* 1.1 (all translations of this kanon are my own).

[11] Ibid., 1.5.

[12] For choral singing, see *Typikon of the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner on Pantelleria* 8–10, text in I. D. Mansvetov, *Tserkovnii ustav (tipik) ego obrazovanie i sudba v grečeskoi i russkoi tserkvi* (Moscow, 1885), 441–5; trans. in J. Thomas and A. C. Hero (eds.), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), vol. 1, 63–4. See also Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects*, 166–9. For a similar aspect of singing the Psalms, see Athanasius, *Letter to Markellinos* 11, PG 27, 12–45; trans. R. C. Gregg, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 109–10. Krueger, 'The Old Testament in Monasticism', in P. Magdalino and R. Nelson (eds.), *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 217–19.

In the account in Genesis, Adam and Eve begin naked and end up clothed in garments made of animal skins. The Syriac and Byzantine traditions, however, envisioned Adam invested initially in Paradise with a glorious robe, which he lost through his transgression. The theme of Adam's post-lapsarian nakedness, raised in the poem's opening, returns at various points. In the first troparion of the sixth ode, addressing Christ himself, the singer emphasises the fall as stripping humanity of immortality.

> In your compassion, Saviour,
> you clothed me in Eden with a divinely woven garment;
> but persuaded by the wicked one, I disregarded your commandment
> and was stripped naked in my wretchedness.[13]

This construction of the human predicament prompts the poet to assign Mary responsibility for reclothing God's creation through the incarnation. The theotokion of the third ode supplicates Mary:

> O holy [Virgin], my hope and protection,
> who alone long ago covered (περιστείλασα) the nakedness of fallen Adam,
> by your childbearing, O chaste one,
> clothe (ἀμφίασον) me anew with incorruption![14]

The incarnation remedied Adam's shame, as Mary became the instrument through which God clothed himself in humanity, restoring the prelapsarian human garment. In fact, Christopher emphasises Mary's role in supplying God with his human vesture. But the implications of God's humanity have yet to protect the distressed and present Christian. The singer calls on Mary to extend the vestment of Christ's salvation to him as well. In this action, the poet imparts to the Theotokos responsibility for clothing humanity even after the time of the incarnation: her act of dressing and redressing humanity is ongoing.

Christopher's hymn also invests Mary with authority over the gates of Paradise, reading the implications of the incarnation and the virgin birth in terms of Mary's control of space.[15] At the end of the fourth ode, the singer addresses her:

> Holy Lady, who has opened up
> for all the faithful the gates of Paradise

[13] Christopher, *On the Transgression of Adam* 6.1.

[14] Ibid., 3.4.

[15] See also D. Krueger, 'Mary at the Threshold: The Mother of God as Guardian in Seventh-Century Palestinian Miracle Accounts', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 31–8.

> that Adam closed long ago by [his] transgression,
> open for me the gates of mercy![16]

Mary thus reverses the singer's expulsion and exile.

> Alas, how I was led astray, envied by the devil
> and cast out from before your [i.e. God's] face.[17]

The appeal to Mary to reopen Eden follows a particularly poetic appeal to Paradise and the angels to join in the singer's lament.

> Weep for me, O ranks of angels,
> O beauties of Paradise and the comeliness of the plantings there,
> for I was unfortunately led astray
> and rebelled against God.
>
> O blessed meadow, O greenery planted by God (φυτὰ θεόφυτα),
> O pleasantness of Paradise, let tears drip on my behalf
> from [your] leaves as if from eyes,
> for I am naked and a stranger to God's glory.[18]

These verses draw on an earlier and anonymous kontakion, *On the Lament of Adam*, composed in the late fifth or early sixth century, part of which was most probably intercalated with Christopher's hymn at its first performance, between the sixth and seventh ode.[19] But the contrast with Mary is salient: while the singer can bid the other elements of the created order to express sympathy with him, only Mary possesses the power to reverse the expulsion.

Other Christian authors had invested Mary with the ability to open Paradise. For example, Christopher's characterisation of the Theotokos as guardian of Eden recalls a verse from the fifth-century *Akathistos Hymn*, which contains among its acclamations of the Mother of God, 'Hail, [you who are] the opener (ἀνοικτήριον) of the gates of Paradise'.[20] And yet the *Akathistos* does not read this aspect of Mary into its treatment of the

[16] Christopher, *On the Transgression of Adam* 4.5.

[17] Ibid., 4.1.

[18] Ibid., 4.2–3.

[19] Maas, *Frühbyzantinische Kirchenpoesie,* 16–20. The earliest manuscript witness to Christopher's *On the Transgression of Adam*, Sinai graecus 734 of the tenth century, assigns the *prooimion* (prelude/introductory strophe) and ten verses of the earlier hymn *On the Lament of Adam* to the same service, presumably to be inserted in the midst of Christopher's hymn, between the sixth and seventh odes, as became the standard practice for intercalating a shortened kontakion in the midst of the kanon hymn. Ordinarily only a kontakion's prooimion and first strophe would be intercalated into a kanon hymn.

[20] *Akathistos Hymn* 7.9 (text: ed. C. A. Trypanis, *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica* (Vienna: Böhlau in Kommission, 1968), 29–39).

first-created humans, although much earlier in the hymn the anonymous poet does praise Mary for resolving the implications of the fall:

> Hail, [you who are] the resurrection of the fallen Adam,
> hail, [you who are] the deliverance of Eve's tears.[21]

In an eighth-century sermon *On the Annunciation*, the patriarch Germanos connected the announcement of the incarnation with the reopening of Paradise with specific reference to Adam and Eve, but did not delineate for Mary a role as gatekeeper:

> Today the divinely planted Eden is opened, and the divinely moulded Adam, who is again enrolled in it by the goodness of [God's] benevolence, dwells there!
>
> Today the ancestral sentence of pain has been released, and the invidious humiliation of our ancestress Eve has ceased, along with her wearisome penalty![22]

Christopher, however, engages in a much tighter juxtaposition of Mary's role as gatekeeper and the restriction of Adam's access to Paradise. This more vivid placement of Mary into Adam's drama results from the poet's efforts to integrate the formal elements of the hymn's genre: the troparia and the theotokia. His theotokia coordinate directly with the themes of Genesis 3 handled in the rest of the odes. This compositional task results in a particular interpretation of Mary's intervention into Adam's narrative.

Not only does Mary guard the gates of Paradise, but Christopher figures her as a portal to salvation in herself. In this metonymy of her virginal hymen, he follows the poet of the *Akathistos*, who hails Mary as the 'door of revered mystery (σεπτοῦ μυστηρίου θύρα)' (15.7) and 'the gate of salvation (ἡ πύλη τῆς σωτηρίας)' (19.6), and Romanos the Melode (ca. 490–ca. 560), who in his first hymn *On the Nativity*, describes her as 'the unopened gate (ἀνοίγει θύραν)'.[23] Nevertheless, in the context of the kanon hymn, Christopher identifies this gate with the gate barring Adam from his land of origin. Thus in the final theotokion we find the following appeal:

> You are the spiritual gate of life through which none may pass (ἀδιόδευτος),
> O Virgin Theotokos, unwedded (ἀνύμφευτε):

[21] Ibid., 1.7–8; my trans.

[22] Germanos, *On the Annunciation* 2. The text appears in D. Fecioru, 'Un nou gen de predica in omiletica ortodoxa', *BOR* 64 (1946): 65–91, 180–92, 386–96; trans. M. B. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008), 222. The version in PG 98, 320–40 lacks this passage.

[23] Romanos the Melode, *Hymns* 1.9.4, 5, 7, in P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis (eds.), *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica: Cantica Genuina* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 4.

by your intercessions (πρεσβείαις), open for me the gates of Paradise that
were closed long ago
that I may glorify you, for after God, you are my helper and strong refuge![24]

Both gate and gatekeeper, Mary supplements Christ's own work of opening Paradise, making her work a sort of pleonasm. The immediately previous troparion credits Christ for remedying the consequences of Adam's sin – a remediation without mediation, if you will.

I put my trust in the abundance of your mercy, O Christ my Saviour,
and in the blood [that flowed] from your divine side (πλευρᾶς);
for through [your blood], O good Lord (Ἀγαθέ), you led forth
mortal nature
and opened for those who worship you the gates (πύλας) of Paradise
that were long ago closed to Adam.[25]

Indeed in the poem Mary consistently reinforces the work of Christ in the atonement, sometimes having a distinct role, at others seemingly doubling the same role. While Mary is hardly a substitute for Christ, nevertheless, the singer depends on Mary to intervene on his behalf with her prayers or power.

Christopher's alternating prayers to Jesus and Mary reflect their parallel and coordinated work for the singer's salvation. Two troparia from the sixth ode show successive appeals. Christopher bids Christ for mercy and acceptance, and then turns immediately in the theotokion to Mary as if for backup.

Have mercy, take pity, Almighty God,
on the work of your hands.
Do not reject me, I entreat (δέομαι) you, good Lord (Ἀγαθέ):
I have cut myself off from the choir of your angels;

Mary chosen by God, and mistress of everything,
you have borne the Lord who is king and redeemer of all.
I have been taken captive (αἰχμάλωτον ὄντα με) from the glory of Paradise:
Call me back (ἀνακάλεσαι)![26]

In the next ode, however, the prayers reverse themselves. The singer calls on Christ to invoke his return to Eden with the same imperative verb he used for the Virgin:

But in your loving compassion, Saviour,
do not despise me as God, but call me back (μὴ ὑπερίδῃς ὡς Θεός, ἀλλ' ἀνακάλεσαί με).[27]

24 Christopher, *On the Transgression of Adam* 9.5.
25 Ibid., 9.4.
26 Ibid., 6.3–4
27 Ibid., 7.3.

The troparion prefaces the command to be recalled with an echo of Psalm 54:2 (LXX): 'Give ear, O God, to my prayer / and do not despise my entreatry (Ἐνώτισαι, ὁ θεός, τὴν προσευχήν μου / καὶ μὴ ὑπερίδῃς τὴν δέησίν μου)'. Then the theotokion repeats essentially the same appeal as the troparion, but follows the language of the Psalm even more closely, this time addressing the prayer to the Virgin.

> Accept my entreaty (Τὴν ἱκέσιόν μου δέησιν … πρόσδεξαι) in your
> compassion (συμπαθείᾳ τῇ σῇ), spotless Lady.
> Grant me forgiveness of my offenses (συγχώρησιν τῶν πταισμάτων),
> O pure one,
> for I cry aloud fervently lamenting:
> Do not despise me, O good [Virgin], but call me back (Μὴ ὑπερίδῃς
> Ἀγαθή, ἀλλ' ἀνακάλεσαί με).[28]

The juxtaposition not only ventures the possibility that the psalm be addressed to the Virgin, but configures both Christ and Mary as compassionate. The final lines of both troparia have nearly the same words and would be sung to the same meter and melody. Both God and his mother have the power to call the singer back to Paradise and reverse the exile. Perhaps most surprising, the poet invests Mary with the authority to pardon sins, a capacity that seems to follow from the fact that like Christ, she is entirely without sin. And yet the construction of the prayer necessarily raises the possibility that the request might not be granted. The poet implicitly figures both Mary and Christ as capable of disapproval and rejection. Both might simply regard the sinner as despicable. The persistence of the 'I' speech into the theotokia shows that not only Christ but also Mary shapes Byzantine Christian subjectivity. Her capacity to reject extends her power over the formation of the penitent.

The co-redeeming power of Christ and Mary, while present in much middle Byzantine hymnography, seems especially pronounced in this hymn. Christopher presents Mary as instrumental, particularly in individual salvation. And yet his treatment is not systematic and maintains an ambiguity about the relative roles of Mary and Christ in facilitating or effecting salvation. In some ways, the hymn anticipates John Geometres' rather elaborate formulation of Mary's role in the mechanics of redemption in the later tenth century.[29] It is unclear, however, to what extent Christopher might have seen himself as advancing or promoting a wider

[28] Ibid., 7.4.

[29] See e.g. J. Galot, 'La plus ancienne affirmation de la corédemption mariale: Le témoignage de Jean le Géometre', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 45 (1957): 187–208.

role for Mary, or whether he simply reflects general trends in Byzantine and perhaps Constantinopolitan Mariologies, starting already in the hymns of Romanos and sermons of Germanos.[30]

The repetition in theotokia of appeals already used in the kanon odes addressing Christ is not unique to Christopher. Andrew of Crete employed a similar technique to address both Christ and Mary in the *Great Kanon*.[31] His first ode, for example, includes three entreaties to Christ to 'take from me the burdensome collar of sin' (Dt 28:48). The hymn's 'I' entreats the 'Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of all' (Jn 1:29). 'In the time of repentance' he bids his 'maker' and 'saviour'.[32] But the ode's theotokion requests this relief from Christ's mother:

> O Theotokos, hope and protection of those who sing hymns to you,
> take from me the burdensome collar of sin:
> and as Lady pure, accept me repentant.[33]

However, this ode, which has among other things referred to the story of Adam and Eve, makes no attempt to connect Mary's power to receive and excuse the sinner to the story of the first humans.

While emphasising Mary's role in saving Adam and his descendants, in *On the Transgression of Adam* Christopher does not engage the conventional and better-known comparisons between Mary and Eve. For example, unlike Sophronios of Jerusalem, who wrote in the seventh century, he does not contrast Mary's measured response to the angel at the annunciation with Eve's rash heeding of the snake in Eden.[34] In contrast to the ninth-century Zakaria I, Catholicos of the Armenians, he does not denigrate Eve as 'lazy, naked, and slow-minded … going around dancing in the Garden', and thus an easy target for the deceiver.[35] Unlike Germanos the patriarch he does not contrast the sorrows of Eve's womb and progeny with the joys issuing

[30] On which, see T. Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 137–41; also see Arentzen's chapter in this volume.

[31] Andrew of Crete, *Great Kanon*, PG 97, 1329–85.

[32] Ibid., 1.16–18.

[33] Ibid., 1.25.

[34] See P. Allen, 'Portrayals of Mary in Greek Homiletic Literature (6th–7th Centuries)', in Cunningham and Brubaker, *The Cult of the Mother of God*, 76.

[35] Zacharia I, Catholicos of the Armenians, *Homily for the Fifth Day of the Annunciation* 9. For the text and French translation, see M. van Esbroeck, 'Une homélie de Zacharie le Catholicos sur l'Annonciation', *HA* 101 (1987): 487–503; for a partial English translation, see M. E. Stone, *Adam and Eve in the Armenian Tradition, Fifth through Seventeenth Centuries* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 359.

from Mary's, the 'mother of dust' with the 'mother of light'.[36] Christopher's Mary is not a second Eve.[37] In fact, Christopher's kanon focuses only on who Mary is for Adam and the singer.

Elsewhere in the kanon *On the Transgression of Adam*, Christopher figures Mary as the space of salvation itself. Beyond her identity as the supplemental mechanism controlling access to Paradise, she becomes Paradise. Dislocation characterises the human predicament. Identifying with Adam, the singer declares, 'I am cast out from God's [presence], exchanging Eden for Hell' (5.3). Mary's control of access to space derives from her persistent virginity, as the theotokion of the fifth ode illustrates:

> All we who are faithful proclaim you as the mystical bridal
> chamber of glory (νυμφῶνα δόξης σε μυστικόν).
> Undefiled conceiver of God,
> therefore I entreat you, O pure one, for I am fallen,
> and make me dwell in the bridal chamber of Paradise
> (νυμφῶνος Παραδείσου).[38]

She herself is the bridal chamber, no doubt a metonymy for her womb. She is the 'tabernacle of the light and of God incarnate' (8.4). She contained Christ within herself, and now she is bid to contain humanity. Mary thus becomes the locus in which humanity joins divinity. Within Mary's body, the consummation recapitulates the incarnation.

Christopher's treatment of Mary as Paradise amplifies acclamations found in earlier Marian sermons and hymns composed for Marian and Christological festivals. The mid-eighth-century John of Euboia sermon *On the Conception of the Virgin* praises her parents by identifying Mary with Eden.

> You are blessed, Joachim and Anna, because you conceived a spiritual Paradise. For she is not only blessed by humans, but also by angels and cherubim and seraphim. For she bore from her undefiled womb the Gardener of creation and of Paradise.[39]

Christopher also echoes Romanos' characterisation of Mary in the second kontakion *On the Nativity*, where Eve awakens Adam to listen to Mary singing a lullaby to the Christ Child. Adam declares,

[36] See N. Tsironis, 'Emotion and the Senses in Marian Homilies of the Middle Byzantine Period', in Cunningham and Brubaker (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God,* 191.

[37] As we find e.g. in Anastasios of Sinai, *Hexaemeron* 4.707–20, ed. and trans. C. A. Kuehn and J. D. Baggarly, OCA 278 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2007).

[38] Christopher, *On the Transgression of Adam* 5.4.

[39] John of Euboea, *On the Conception of the Virgin* 12, PG 96, 1490; trans. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 184. For John's identity see Cunningham's remarks, ibid., 45–7.

> I recognise spring, wife, and I sense the delight
> that we fell from long ago; for I see Paradise
> a new one, another one, the Virgin
> carrying in her bosom (κόλποις) the very Tree of Life
> the holy thing that Cherubim once guarded, so I should not touch.[40]

For Romanos, Mary is the Garden of Eden, a landscape containing the tree now figured as Christ himself, suckling at her breast.[41] For Christopher, however, Mary serves as a room or vessel, enveloping the savable subject, providing a venue for his wedding with the bridegroom.

Conclusions

Christopher's hymn offers an interesting monument in the history of the liturgical celebration of the Virgin. The poetic form of the kanon opened new possibilities to integrate Mary into the trajectory of Adam. The hymnographer's determination to use the conventions of the kanon to emphasise and explore a variety of roles for the Theotokos in the salvation of humanity results in an idiosyncratic Mariology. She is more than an intercessor. She is at once the gate, the guardian and the place itself. Christopher's achievement lies in his dynamic portrait of the Virgin that corresponds directly to the biblical narrative of the fall as reimagined and refocused in the hymn. Chanted on the threshold of Lent, *On the Transgression of Adam* offers Mary to penitent and fasting Christians as potent champion and refuge. As one of Christopher's theotokia bids:

> We sing your praises, O Mary full of God's grace (Θεοχαρίτωτε),
> for I am darkened grievously by the passions.
> Shine [upon me] the light of mercy, O hope of the hopeless.[42]

Mary's place in salvation history assists in the formation of the Lenten self as a descendant of Adam.

[40] Romanos, *Hymns* 2.7.1–5; trans. Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song*, 126.

[41] For an interesting parallel, see Zacharia, *Homily for the Fifth Day of the Annunciation* 15, ed. and trans. Stone, *Adam and Eve*, 359: '[He who] waters the universe with the four rivers spreading from the Edenic source, today by dwelling in you, having flowed forth watered the universe throughout from the immortal chalice'.

[42] Christopher, *On the Transgression of Adam* 8.4.

9 The Spiritual and Material Temple

Byzantine Kanon Poetry for the Feast of the Entrance

FR DAMASKINOS OLKINUORA

The feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple (*Ta Eisodia tes Theotokou*), celebrated according to the Byzantine liturgical calendar on 21 November, constitutes one of the twelve great feasts of the church year. It commemorates the event of the dedication of Mary as a three-year-old child in the Temple of Jerusalem by her parents, Joachim and Anna; she is accompanied in the Temple by a procession of virgins and, eventually, all the house of Israel, and is then received into the Holy of Holies by the high priest Zacharias. During her stay in the Temple, she is fed by an angel and leads an ascetic life, until she is betrothed to Joseph at the age of twelve.

The earliest and most important source for the themes of the Entrance is the second-century apocryphon, the *Protevangelium of James,*[1] although many subsequent but very influential narratives, called *Lives* of the Virgin,[2] include more elaborate passages on the event. The feast itself seems to appear as an independent liturgical celebration rather late, though there are also earlier theories that suggest it was established as early as in the sixth century.[3] The earliest credible evidence for its celebration as an independent feast is seen in the titles of two homilies by Germanos

Many of the observations here have been presented earlier in my doctoral dissertation, published under my lay name, J. Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography for the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos: An Intermedial Approach,* Studia Patristica Fennica 4 (Helsinki: Societas Patristica Fennica, 2015); however, that study refers more widely to the whole hymnographic corpus of the feast of the Entrance, together with sermons, musical compositions and iconography of the feast, while the present chapter concentrates exclusively on the kanon repertoire.

1 This dating is confirmed, among others, by F. Bovon in *Studies in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 236.

2 The earliest of these, written by Epiphanios of Kallistratos, is discussed by M. B. Cunningham in the present volume; for an introduction to the *Lives,* see S. Mimouni, *Les traditions anciennes sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de Marie: Études littéraires, historiques et doctrinales,* VigChrSupp 104 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 89–105.

3 In the early twentieth century it was widely considered that the feast day was established on the occasion of the consecration of the Nea church in Jerusalem; more exactly, S. Vailhé suggests that the first date of the celebration of the feast was 21 November 543; see S. Vailhé, 'La dédicace de Sainte-Marie-la-Neuve à Jérusalem', *REA* 2 (1903): 138–9. However, these theories have little support today.

of Constantinople, dating from the eighth century:[4] this information is confirmed by Theodore of Balsamon, who states in the 1100s that the feast was first celebrated in Constantinople in 730.[5] Theodora Antonopoulou suggests that the feast would have been reintroduced by the iconophile patriarch Tarasios of Constantinople in the late eighth or early ninth century.[6] I would hypothesise that the celebration of the Entrance was discouraged by iconoclasts, and therefore its celebration did not spread during the controversies of the eighth century; it is thus logical that Tarasios, as an iconophile, encouraged the veneration of the Theotokos in the form of this recent festival. This hypothesis requires further investigation, but in any case, most recent studies agree with the later dating that locates the origins of the feast in eighth-century Constantinople.[7] Moreover, from a more theological point of view, it would be logical to claim that the introduction of a feast with such a strong emphasis on the ascetic, almost monastic, lifestyle of the Theotokos would fit well in the iconophile circles of the eighth and ninth centuries: this seems to be the first point in history when Mary becomes a popular character in literature with a strong monastic background.[8]

[4] There are two homilies for the feast of the Entrance attributed to Germanos (Homilies 3 and 4, PG 98, 292–320), but the first one is most probably inauthentic; see M. B. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008), 39.

[5] See M. J. Kishpaugh, *The Feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple: A Historical and Literary Study* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1941), 30–1.

[6] T. Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 165, n. 24.

[7] See e.g. C. C. Carlton, '"The Temple That Held God": Byzantine Marian Hymnography and the Christ of Nestorius', *SVTQ* 50:1–2 (2006): 103–5; M. B. Cunningham, 'The Use of the *Protevangelion of James* in Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 174; D. Krausmüller, 'Making the Most of Mary: The Cult of the Virgin in the Chalkoprateia from Late Antiquity to the Tenth Century', in Brubaker and Cunningham, *The Cult of the Mother of God,* 228–9, esp. nn. 52–3. To my knowledge, the only current alternative theory is presented by Basil Lourié, who suggests that the celebrations of the Entrance actually precede the consecration of the Nea church in Palestine in 543, assuming that the feast originates from as early as 500; see B. Lourié, 'Peter the Iberian and Dionysius the Areopagite: Honigmann–van Esbroeck's Thesis Revisited', *Scrinium* 6 (2010): 143–212, esp. 196–9. However, there is not enough evidence, in my view, to support this theory.

[8] In other words, many of the iconophiles were monastics or bishops with a strong monastic background. In earlier ascetic literature, Mary is almost absent, but as Niki Tsironis argues, her veneration during the iconoclast controversy was seen in conjunction with the veneration of icons; see N. Tsironis, 'The Mother of God in the Iconoclastic Controversy', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Milan and Athens: Skira, 2000), 27–39. However, scholarly opinions on this idea are not unanimous; see Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven,* 37. See also nn. 42–3 of this chapter and the relevant discussion.

The aim of the present chapter is not, however, to delve into the history of the feast of the Entrance, but rather to introduce the kanon repertoire composed for its celebration.[9] There are a total of eight kanons, dating perhaps from a period between the eighth and tenth centuries,[10] out of which three (excluding the omitted second odes) are included in the standard, contemporary liturgical books of the Greek Orthodox Church. First, there is a kanon of the forefeast in the fourth mode, attributed to Joseph the Hymnographer (818–ca. 886) and assigned to be sung on 20 November (hereafter referred to as *Kanon for the Forefeast I*).[11] For the feast day itself, there are two kanons in the fourth and first modes, attributed to hymnographers of unknown identity named George and Basil, and I shall call these *Kanons for the Entrance I–II*.[12]

The five remaining kanons are no longer in liturgical use. There is one for the forefeast in the first mode, which I call *Kanon for the Forefeast II*,[13] and the acrostic of the theotokia suggests, again, an author called George.[14] A kanon with an alphabetic acrostic for the feast day is attributed to Joseph and composed in the first mode (*Kanon for the Entrance III*),[15] and there are

[9] Kanon poetry is a genre that emerged most probably, as Stig Frøyshov suggests, in the fourth or fifth century, even though it had previously been assumed that it originated in eighth-century Palestine; see his 'Rite of Jerusalem' in *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology,* Canterbury Press, last accessed May 2016, www.hymnology.co.uk/r/rite-of-jerusalem. For a classical introduction to the form of the kanon, see E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 198–239.

[10] Just as the question of authorship remains open, so the dating of these hymns is an impossible task. However, if the feast was introduced as late as in the eighth or ninth century, it is highly unlikely that any of these kanons would have been composed before the emergence of the feast.

[11] See *Menaia tou olou eniautou*, vol. 2: *November–December* (Rome: n.p., 1889), 202–14.

[12] Ibid., 223–35, for the texts of the kanons and Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 279–80 and 288–9, for the previously unpublished second odes. Concerning the identity of George, W. Christ and M. Paranikas, in their *Anthologia graeca carminum christianorum* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1871), 264, suggest that he must be someone other than George of Nikomedia, who also composed homilies for the feast of the Entrance (BHG 1078, 1108 and 1152).

[13] The text has been published in J. Schiró (ed.), *Analecta hymnica graeca*, 13 vols. (Rome: Istituto di Studi Byzantini e Neoellenici, 1966–80), vol. 3, 465–77; however, another edition of the text, together with an English translation, has been published in Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 281–7, based on Sinait gr. 570, ff. 70^{r}–1^{v}. The unpublished kanons, excluding the George, *Kanon of the Forefeast II,* have also been listed in E. Papaeliopoulou-Photopoulou, *Tameion anekdoton Byzantinon asmatikon kanonon* (Athens: Syllogos pros Diadosin Ophelimon Biblion, 1996), 100–1, entries 259–62.

[14] However, it must be borne in mind that acrostics are not always a reliable source for defining the authorship, since they can also imply dedication; see D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 171.

[15] A modern edition, based on Sinait. gr. 570, ff. 82^{r}–4^{r}, can be found in Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 289–96.

two kanons, in the fourth and third modes, attributed to George (*Kanons for the Entrance IV–V*).[16] Finally, there is a *Kanon for the Afterfeast* in the second mode, sung on 22 November and, again, attributed to George, with integrated troparia to the saints celebrated on that day.[17] After observing such an extensive repertoire, one can ask the following question: what were the criteria for the selection of the kanons in later manuscripts? In some cases it is easy to find a practical reason. For example, in a kanon such as the *Kanon for the Entrance IV* attributed to George, the use of very rare heirmoi was probably the reason for rejecting the poem from later manuscripts. Also, it is noteworthy that the contemporary *Menaia* do not include separate kanons for afterfeasts, which perhaps led to the rejection of the *Kanon for the Afterfeast* of the Entrance. As for the rest of the kanons, the repertoire printed in the published liturgical books happens to be most widespread in the early *Menaia,* and becomes dominant especially in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts.

In the following study, I shall examine the most important theological ideas of these kanons from two points of view. First, the most prominent exegetical images of the Theotokos, characteristic for this feast, will be presented; these images place the feast in the universal narrative of salvation history, where past, present and future are all synchronically experienced. Secondly, attention is drawn to the importance of the form of the hymns; how narratives appear in the kanon (typically a rather non-narrative hymnographic genre), and also how the musical and textual structure of the hymns creates a broader understanding of the life of the Mother of God.

Exegetical Images of the Theotokos

The kanons of the Entrance present an interesting variety of exegetical images, based on typology, allegory, prophecy and metaphor; it is often difficult to make any differentiation between these categories.[18] Moreover, the images can be thematically divided into three main groups. The most

[16] Both of these kanons can be found in Paris. gr. 259, ff. 210^{v}–13^{r} and 215^{v}–18^{r}; for a modern edition, see Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 298–314.

[17] This kanon can also be found in Paris. gr. 259, ff. 220^{v}–4^{v}; a reduction of the texts, with the troparia to the saint excluded, is published in Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 315–22.

[18] This idea is supported today by many scholars, most importantly regarding typologies and allegories; see, for instance, F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 189–201, and, in the context of hymnography, B. B. Bucur, 'Exegesis of Biblical Theophanies in Byzantine Hymnography: Rewritten Bible?', *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 92–112.

prominent one consists of images related to the Temple (*naos*) of Jerusalem and its furniture, such as the ark (*kibotos*), the lamp stand (*lychnia*) and the censer (*thymiaterion*). This group points out the paradoxality of the spiritual temple, which is the Theotokos, entering the material Temple of Jerusalem. However, the typology of Mary as a temple is not unique for this feast, but instead represents a centuries-old tradition. It was first mentioned by Gregory of Nazianzus[19] and, further on, developed by Proclus of Constantinople.[20] Most temple-related images appear during the church year in the theotokia as standard typologies, but in the context of the Entrance, they acquire a special emphasis; the feast is their *Sitz im Leben.*

The *Kanon for the Entrance III* attributed to Joseph begins with this temple typology, as if to point out directly the most important theological image of the feast, presenting Mary as the fulfilment of two Old Testament prefigurations – the Temple and its gate:

> Rejoice, heaven and earth, exult, God-proclaiming prophets, for behold, the one whom you beheld of old as a sealed gate enters the gates of the Temple, now recognised as God's most pure temple.[21]

On the other hand, the *Kanon for the Forefeast II* attributed to George employs the rhetorical device of *prosopopoiia* by giving an active role to the Temple, and, thus, creates a feeling of an encounter between two persons. This emphasises Mary's own consent to receive the incarnate Logos into her womb. The hymnographer creates a parallelism between Mary's deliberate consent to receive God and the way that the Temple, as if a person, receives the child:

> Having opened the gates and entrances, the Temple receives the gate of God, the King of all, and adorns the inner parts. At her entrance, the Temple is illuminated with grace.[22]

Moreover, the idea of Mary as the temple of God is expanded to apply to all men; the Mother of God is revealed as a representative of the whole humanity, whose aim is, according to the Pauline idea,[23] to become temples of the Holy Spirit:

[19] It appears in the seventh poem in hexameter (*To Nemesius,* PG 37, 1565A: 'The Mother was a temple for Christ, while Christ was a temple for the Logos' Μήτηρ γὰρ Χριστοῖο ναὸς, Χριστὸς δὲ Λόγοιο).

[20] See Carlton, 'The Temple', 115–25, for a more detailed discussion on the temple imagery during the Nestorian controversy, and 106–10 for the idea of Mary as a living temple.

[21] Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography*, 289.

[22] Ibid., 281.

[23] Cf. 1 Cor 6:19.

> Come and behold the strange sight today. The God-containing temple now sets foot in the Temple of God, showing her Son that those who sing praises unto her are themselves the dwelling-places of God.[24]

In addition to being the temple, Mary is also called the tabernacle (*skene*), in order to provide even more epithets to praise her God-containing role. However, a more abstract interpretation for this image is also provided, one referring to the Exodus. Just as Moses raised the tabernacle, a tent, on God's order in the desert (Ex 26), thus did Mary raise the whole human race by accepting to carry Christ. As a result of this, the tabernacle and, again, the Theotokos herself, symbolise the whole of human nature:

> Stretch out your sacred hands, o venerable elder, and receive the divine tabernacle in the chambers of the Temple. Through her, fallen human nature will be raised up like a tent, proclaimed Anna to Zacharias, when she dedicated the pure Virgin as an offering.[25]

Above, in the *Kanon for the Entrance III* attributed to Joseph, I noted how the Mother of God is called the 'sealed gate', an image that reflects the famous vision of Ezekiel, where the prophet is shown an impassable gate reserved for God himself.[26] This typology typically refers to the virginal motherhood of Mary: the entrance to and from her womb, the temple of the Logos, is only meant for God himself. However, the kanons do not rely on such a simplistic interpretation; instead, this typology acquires more allegorical dimensions and points to a mystery beyond comprehension. The impassability of the gate is paralleled not only with Mary's physical virginity, but also with the spiritual incomprehensibility of Christ's incarnation; the act of sealing refers to the Dionysian idea of the cloud of darkness surrounding God's essence.[27] On the other hand, the Mother of God is not only a *closed* gate, but also a gate that *opens itself*. By opening the gates of the Temple with her Entrance therein and, accordingly, offering her womb to God in order to let him enter the world in human form, Mary has allowed all human reason to rejoice in the spiritual joy of the incarnation:

[24] *Kanon for the Entrance III* 2.1, in Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 290.

[25] *Kanon for the Entrance III* 6.3; Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography*, 294.

[26] See Ez 40:1–44:3.

[27] Pseudo-Dionysius is known for his apophatic or negative theology, and his image of a dark cloud of unknowingness as the highest state of the knowledge of God became popular in later Byzantine theology; see Y. de Andia (ed.), *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en orient et en occident: Actes du Colloque International, Paris, 21–24 septembre 1994* (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1997).

> Having opened the gates of the Temple of God, the Glorious Gate through which human thoughts cannot pass now urges us to enter with her and to delight in her divine marvels.[28]

Even more explicitly, the opening of the gates also alludes to the gate of Eden, which in ancient times was closed because of the transgression of the first Eve. Mary becomes an antitype to the closed gate of paradise:

> When the impassable gate of the King of glory is set forth as an offering to Him in the hidden part of the Temple, the ancient gate of Eden's delight, closed unto humanity by [our] forefathers, now opens unto mortals.[29]

One of the core actions of the Temple was sacrificing and, accordingly, Mary is also considered a sacrifice for all humanity. The relevant passages in the kanons connect her with two events, thus creating a twofold typology. As a fulfilment of an event in the past, she is seen as the antitype of the dedication of Samuel in the Old Testament.[30] On the other hand, the event reaches out to events yet to come, and the Mother of God becomes a type for the sacrifice of Christ. The *Kanon for the Entrance II* attributed to Basil couples these two typologies in a single sentence:

> Let us all, keeping feast in faith, sing the praises of the undefiled Maiden [lit. heifer, *damalis*], most glorious and of many names, for she conceived in the flesh the divine Victim [lit. calf, *moschos*] and sacrificial Offering.[31]

This 'heifer' references two Old Testament passages, the first of which is the above-mentioned dedication of Samuel, where a three-year-old calf (a male equivalent of heifer) was sacrificed (1 Sam 1:24–5); during her dedication, the Theotokos was also three years old, as the *Protevangelium* states, thus making Mary an antitype of both Samuel and the sacrificial calf. But the epithet 'heifer' also connects the Mother of God with the sacrifice of Jesus on behalf of humanity's sins, by referring to the sin offering described in Leviticus 4–5. Two other animals are included in the sin offering, namely a ewe-lamb and a dove, both of which are also used as types for the Mother of God in the kanons of the feast.[32]

[28] *Kanon for the Entrance I* 1.4; *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 223. The English version is in Mother Mary and K. Ware (trans.), *The Festal Menaion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), 175.

[29] *Kanon for the Afterfeast* 7.1; Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 319.

[30] 1 Sam 1–2.

[31] *Kanon for the Entrance II* 5.3; *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 228, *The Festal Menaion,* 182.

[32] The ewe-lamb can be found in *Kanon for the Entrance II* 3.4; 6.3, as well as in *Kanon for the Entrance V* 7.2. The dove is presented together with the ewe-lamb in both of the above-mentioned troparia of *Kanon II*.

The *Protevangelium* (chapter 8) provides a moral interpretation for the symbol of the dove to describe Mary's purity while she dwelt in the Temple, an idea echoed in the kanons. Moreover, there is a third interpretation, in which Mary is paralleled with the dove that informed Noah the flood had ended (Gen 8:6–12). The Mother of God is presented as a messenger, acting as counterpart to the messenger dove after the cataclysm, as she signifies the end of the obscure law and preaches salvation and the beginning of a new era:

> As a dove, the Theotokos noetically bears the sprig of the olive tree in her body, proclaiming beforehand in the house of God the peace and calm following the ancient flood that tyrannised all earth.[33]

We observed that the first and most important group of images sets the scene for the events of the Entrance: the Mother of God, a living temple, enters the Temple of the ancients, as a pure sacrifice. But what happens inside? The second ensemble of exegetical images of the Entrance is related to the procession of women in the Temple. As the *Protevangelium* (chapter 7) describes, Mary was led to the Temple by a group of virgins carrying lamps, after which the whole house of Israel followed her. The role of the leading virgins was to carry lamps, in order to attract the attention of the child and keep her from turning back to her parents. The prominent position of the virgins prefigures the child's miraculous virginity, but a group of lamp-carrying virgins also brings other connotations to the believer's mind; even though not explicitly mentioned, the connection with the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1–13 is apparent.

But Mary, as an ambassador of the whole of humanity in its quest for reconciliation with God, gathers around her the support of all believers from different times. In this synchronic spirit, the virgins call the choirs of believers to join with them in the celebration of the Entrance. The use of *enargeia* or vivification transports the choirs of virgins to the moment of the performance of the hymn, and their reasons (*logoi*) are illuminated by the Logos' divine radiance:

> In anticipation of your coming, today the choirs of lamp-bearers brightly prepare both visible lamps and noetic lamps of the *logoi*, crying out: all works of the Lord, praise the Lord with hymns and exalt Him unto all ages.[34]

[33] *Kanon for the Entrance V* 2.2, in Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 307.
[34] *Kanon for the Forefeast II* 8.1, in Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 286.

However, it is not only the virgins in the Temple of Jerusalem who await Christ; it is also the believers singing the hymn who join the Entrance procession and, thus, the chanting of the hymn elevates the church-goers to a timeless, divine reality:

> Celebrating the coming of the Theotokos into the sanctuary, let us too, carrying lamps today in spirit, go in joy with the virgins to the Temple.[35]

From a typological point of view, the procession is most prominently seen as the fulfilment of the prefiguration presented in Psalm 44 (LXX), a royal wedding hymn. Mary is God's bride, and thus, her marriage with him must take place before her (unfulfilled) betrothal to Joseph. The Entrance is, indeed, a wedding procession, even though Mary is just a child. But the real union, giving birth to Christ, is yet to come, and the Entrance is an engagement contract testified by the Holy Spirit:

> The contract of thy betrothal, the divine tokens of thy Motherhood past understanding, O pure Virgin, are written today by the Holy Spirit in the house of God.[36]

Just as the iconography of the feast presents the Theotokos in adult vestments, instead of childish clothes,[37] so do the kanons agree with this idea; the head-scarf is not only a vestment of a married woman, but it also manifests her spiritual maturity that becomes apparent in her own decisiveness on the dedication to the Temple:

> Clearly seeing the three-year-old treading and living of her own will in the Temple, the parents of the Virgin offer their voices in thanksgiving and ardent faith.[38]

[35] *Kanon for the Entrance II* 3.6, *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 225; *The Festal Menaion,* 178. The idea of an eternal time in the Byzantine liturgical life has been studied, among others, by A. Andreopoulos in his intriguing *Gazing on God: Trinity, Church and Salvation in Orthodox Thought and Iconography* (London: James Clarke, 2013), 39–58. From the point of view of the hymnography of the Entrance, see Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 139–42.

[36] *Kanon for the Entrance II* 5.4, *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 228, *The Festal Menaion,* 182.

[37] This is the case in all known Entrance scenes; for a general description of the iconography of the Entrance, see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'Enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en occident,* 2 vols. (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1964), vol. 1, 136–67. It is probable that young women in at least early second-millennium Byzantium did not wear scarves; see T. Dawson, 'Propriety, Practicality and Pleasure: The Parameters of Women's Dress in Byzantium, A.D. 1000–1200', in L. Garland (ed.), *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800–2000* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 44–8, for further remarks. I have also argued that the prominence of the veil underlines the fact that Mary enters the Holy of Holies through the veil, which she later weaves, and also the cult of her veil; see Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 237–9. For more brief reflections on the question of Mary's adult vestments and spiritual maturity, see Eirini Panou's contribution in the present volume.

[38] *Kanon for the Entrance III* 7.2, in Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 295.

Her spiritual maturity is seen as a result of her role as one who is higher than all other created beings:

> Three years old in the flesh and many years old in spirit, more spacious than the heavens and higher than the powers above, let the Bride of God be praised in song.[39]

Even though Mary is just a small child, she is also a bride: and due to her childish innocence, she will dwell in the Holy of Holies, as if in a wedding chamber. The *Kanon for the Forefeast II* attributed to George describes the procession in the Temple as a mystical wedding procession, even though Mary is still a child:

> Today the Temple receives you as a pure and truly beautiful bride adorned with great glory and introduces the symbols of your mystical marriage to God, arraying you in bridal finery, O only undefiled one.[40]

However, monastic women also covered their heads with a veil. Accordingly, the abundant references to the procession of virgins and Mary's virginity also seem to include monastic or ascetic connotations and the idea of monastic profession as marriage with Christ. The feast of the Entrance reintroduces in a liturgical context this idea that was prominent, earlier, in the ascetic works of Athanasius of Alexandria, for example.[41] Nonetheless, it became less popular as the theology of Mary as the Theotokos developed during the Christological controversies of the fifth century.[42] In the kanons of the Entrance, there are no explicit references to the Mother of God as a monastic figure, but this aspect is prominent in both the *Lives* of the Mother of God and the homilies that are related to this feast, in which Mary's years in the Temple are embellished with descriptions that resemble those presented in hagiography.[43] However, in the kanons, there are two elements that emphasise the deliberate ascetic struggle of the Virgin. First, the child is described as being aware of the situation. What is strange, nevertheless, is that no words are put into her own mouth – either in the

[39] *Kanon for the Entrance II* 3.5, *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 225, *The Festal Menaion,* 178.

[40] *Kanon for the Forefeast II* 4.3, Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 283.

[41] This becomes apparent, among other texts, from Athanasius' letter *On Virginity, Le Muséon* 42 (1929): 197–275.

[42] The history of the idea of Mary as an ideal monastic still waits to be written; I hope to pursue this task in the near future. The idea is dealt with in other contributions in the present volume; see e.g. the chapters by Mary B. Cunningham and Fr Maximos Constas.

[43] E.g. chapter 12 of the Georgian *Life* attributed to Maximos the Confessor, in M. van Esbroeck (ed.), *Maxime le Confesseur: Vie de la Vierge,* CSCO, Scriptores iberici 21 (Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 13; Eng. trans. in S. J. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin: Maximus the Confessor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 44. Also the *Life* by Epiphanios denotes Mary's ascetic lifestyle; see PG 120, 192–3.

hymnographic corpus or in the homilies or the related apocrypha – even though one would expect a three-year-old child to be able to speak, especially if she is understood to be much more mature than other children of her age. Is her silence a sign of her awareness of the ineffability of the mystery, or her high status that allows her to stay above all the fuss and excitement of others? This fact is even more paradoxical when compared to the narratives on the Annunciation, where Mary is said to be surprised by the angel's visit and initially unaware of her task as the birth-giver of God; sometimes she does not even recognise Gabriel to be an angel, and Gabriel, in his turn, tries to remind her that he is the one who fed her in the Holy of Holies, but this has no effect on her.[44]

On the other hand, even though explicit monastic references are lacking from the kanons, other hymnography of the Entrance does refer to the time Mary spent in the Temple as a period of preparation for her future task of receiving the Bridegroom in her womb.[45] The fact that she follows a sort of monastic rule reflects a centuries-old tradition preceding the hymnography of this particular feast: for example, Gregory of Nyssa argues that Mary's words in the Gospel narrative of the Annunciation, 'How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?' (Lk 1:34) indicate her previous virginal vows.[46]

The last significant group of exegetical images related to the feast of the Entrance do not function exclusively as antitypes of previous Old Testament

[44] Middle Byzantine texts on the Entrance and the Annunciation do not provide a unified narrative, but the idea of Mary not recognising Gabriel is a common theme in most sermons and hymns on the Annunciation. However, this might be only for dramatic effect. From the point of view of the Entrance, an important Annunciation homily was composed by Germanos of Constantinople (PG 98, 320–40), who also composed the earliest sermon for the feast of the Entrance; the text is discussed in the present volume by Thomas Arentzen. In order to convince the doubtful Mother of God, Gabriel refers to the time after the Entrance: 'When you were in the Holy of Holies, did you not see me, blessed one? You saw me then and received nourishment from my fiery hand. For I am Gabriel, and have always stood before the glory of the Lord.' *Oration on the Annunciation of the Supremely Holy Theotokos,* ed. D. Fecioru, 'Un nou gen de predica in omiletica ortodoxa', *BOR* 64 (1946), 79; trans. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven,* 230. For more discussion on Mary's unawareness of Gabriel's identity and its relation to the Entrance, see K. Ware, 'The Feast of Mary's Silence: The Entry into the Temple (21 Nov.)', in A. Stacpoole (ed.), *Mary in Doctrine and Devotion. Papers of the Liverpool Congress, 1989, of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1990), 34–41; see also Georgia Frank's contribution in the present volume for discussion of Mary's silence; S. Harvey, 'Spoken Words, Voiced Silence: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition', *JECS* 9 (2001): 105–31, for a discussion of the Syrian tradition.

[45] Such as the second *sticheron apostichon* of the Great Vespers: '"Go, Child", she [Anna] said, "to Him who gave thee unto me; be unto Him an offering and a sweet smelling incense. Go into the place which none may enter: learn its mysteries and prepare thyself to become the pleasing and beautiful dwelling-place of Jesus, who grants the world great mercy."' *The Festal Menaion,* 171, *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 221.

[46] *On the Birthday of Christ,* PG 46, 1140C–1141A.

prefigurations; rather, they become prefigurations for later events in the lives of the Theotokos and her Son. Most importantly, this group of images refers to the Annunciation, and it is especially noteworthy that the Entrance and Annunciation are bound together also through the Old Testament reference to the dedication of Samuel.[47] According to the *Protevangelium,* Mary dwelt in the Holy of Holies, being fed by an angel. The identity of this angel remains hidden in the apocryphon: however, the hymnographic corpus, as well as the homiletic tradition of the feast, assures us that it was Gabriel.[48] The act of nourishment is seen as a prefiguration for the archangel's greeting at the Annunciation, as there is a mimetic connection:[49] in both cases the angel is sent to Mary.

One of the most prominent elements of the textual tradition of the Annunciation is the use of *chairetismoi,* salutations, and echoes of Gabriel's greetings can be heard in the Entrance kanons, too:

> O ye faithful, offering to the Theotokos the salutation of the angel, let us raise our cry: Hail! O Bride most beautiful. Hail! bright cloud … Hail! thou hope of all. All the creation joins the angel Gabriel, crying out to the Theotokos in fitting song: Hail! undefiled Mother of God.[50]

The nourishment also carries eucharistic connotations. The *Protevangelium* does not specify the type of nourishment, but it is explicitly mentioned in both kanons and other hymns of the feast that it was bread. This angelic bread is seen as a prefiguration of Christ, whose body is distributed in the form of bread in communion:

> She is nourished by the hand of the angel, as she will give birth unspeakably to heavenly bread for our sake.[51]

47 We referred above to the way the Entrance imitates the narrative of Samuel's dedication; for the relevant discussion on the Annunciation, see N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 272, and Carlton, 'The Temple', 108.

48 See also my n. 44.

49 It is very surprising that the mimetic connection with the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is not prominent in the literature related to the Entrance: it is more apparent in the iconographic tradition, as Lafontaine-Dosogne points out in her *Iconographie de l'Enfance,* 149.

50 *Kanon for the Entrance II* 9.4–5, *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 234–5, *The Festal Menaion,* 192.

51 *Kanon for the Forefeast I* 7.2, *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 210. A more direct reference to the divine liturgy where the believers receive the body of Christ is made by Theophylaktos of Ohrid in his homily *On the Presentation of Blessed Mary,* PG 126, 141C: 'Thus, you will surely be nourished with the divine and mystical bread, brought and given to you by an angel, if you proclaim and believe that the priest is an angel of the Lord.' It is explicitly mentioned also elsewhere that Mary's nourishment was bread; see e.g. *Kanon for the Forefeast I* 7.2, and *Kanon for the Entrance II* 4.5.

In order to emphasise this eucharistic image, Mary is also referred to as the vine that brought forth the bunch of grapes, out of which 'the wine of joy' (*oinos eufrosynes*) was made.[52]

Indeed, the whole feast of the Entrance seems to be located in a border-zone between the Old and New Covenants. On one hand, the Mother of God becomes a fulfilment of the earlier types and prefigurations, such as the Temple and Psalm 44 (LXX). On the other, all of these earlier types, as well as the last group of the prefigurations of the Annunciation and the Eucharist, refer to the New Covenant. The hymnographic references to the old types and the shadows of law passing away during the Entrance are abundant, and the procession in the Temple of Jerusalem is seen as the first public sign of the incarnation:

> The written Law has passed away and vanished as a shadow, and the rays of grace shone forth at thine entry into the Temple of God, O undefiled Virgin Mother, who art forever blessed.[53]

Narrative Structures

In the foregoing discussion, I did not examine kanons separately as independent poems, but rather reconstructed an overview of the thematic elements present in the whole corpus. It is true that in general, kanons and other hymnographic genres, such as kathismata, apolytikia and stichera, are much less dramatic than kontakia, and most often kanons do not present a logical narrative, with a few exceptions.[54] This is probably the reason why kanon poetry has received much less critical scholarly attention than have the kontakia.

But narratives are not completely absent from kanons either,[55] and we certainly do not lack them in the Entrance kanons. Probably the most explicit narrative, following a dialogue form, appears in the eighth odes of

52 *Kanon for the Forefeast I* 4.3, *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 206.

53 *Kanon for the Entrance I* 7.3, *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* 230, *The Festal Menaion,* 186.

54 Perhaps the most famous example of a dramatic kanon is the kanon of the Annunciation, which is a dialogue between Gabriel and Mary; see *Menaia tou olou eniautou,* vol. 4: *March and April* (Rome: [n.p.], 1898), 176–82.

55 There are a few exceptions among kanon repertoire, where narratives are dominant throughout the whole poem. Such is the famous Great Kanon by Andrew of Crete that runs through salvation history from the creation to Christ's incarnation, but an even more explicit narrative on a certain miracle is the second kanon on St Theodore of Tyre, sung on the first Saturday of the Great Lent and attributed to the eleventh-century author John Mauropous; see *Triodion katanyktikon* (Rome: n.p., 1879), 211–19 and 463–91.

Joseph's *Kanon for the Forefeast I* and George's *Kanon for the Entrance I*; these will be discussed below in more detail. However, there are also more subtle narrative elements in the other kanons that, like a mosaic, offer a variety of pieces (in other words different approaches to the same theme) whose totality not only constructs an intertextual exposition of the theme, but also contributes to the formation of synaesthetic images in the minds of the believers.[56]

In some other instances, the kanons provide a continuous narrative from the first troparion to the last. In the case of the Entrance, the narrative logically follows the processional order of the events: the child enters the Temple with her parents, and finally she is taken into the sanctuary in order to be nurtured by the angel. *Kanon for the Forefeast II* exposes such a structure, starting from the opening of the gates of the Temple and finally, in the eighth and ninth odes, her entrance into the sanctuary and the reception of sustenance from the angel's hand (Table 9.1). It is noteworthy that the narrative of the kanon draws no influence from the biblical odes, except for the standard refrain of ode 8 ('O all works of Lord, bless the Lord!').

In the liturgical context, this movement or indeed ascent towards the Holy of Holies, the symbol of eternity and God's kingdom,[57] is even more enhanced by the standard iconography of the Entrance, which was established as early as the tenth century. The icons depict a gradual movement from the gates of the Temple to the doors of the sanctuary, depicted in the style of a Byzantine church, and finally Mary's nourishment in the Holy of Holies.[58] In addition, this gradual movement with the sanctuary as its centre is underlined by the very performance of the liturgy itself, especially during the Middle Byzantine era, when processional liturgies were extremely popular.[59]

[56] I have intentionally alluded to Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality, namely, that it is a 'mosaic of quotations'; see T. Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 37. From a theological point of view, Carol Harrison has explained patristic views on the relationship between sense perception, including hearing, and forming mental images and, further on, imprints on the soul: *The Art of Listening in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. 61–83.

[57] There were steps that led to the Holy of Holies. It is also interesting that, as M. Barker in her *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004), 23, notes, the Holy of Holies in the earlier Temple theology was considered a space of theosis, which would fit into the reasons why Mary must enter in; she is, after all, to become the one who gives birth to the union of humanity and divinity, the person of Jesus Christ.

[58] See n. 37.

[59] As R. Taft notes in *Through their own Eyes: Liturgy as the Byzantines Saw it* (Berkeley, CA: Inter-Orthodox Press, 2006), 38–40, processional liturgies were identified especially with the Mother of God. Moreover, B. V. Pentcheva suggests in 'The "Activated" Icon: The Hodegetria Procession and Mary's Eisodos', in Vassilaki, *Images of the Mother of God,* 195–208,

Table 9.1. The narrative progression of the *Kanon for the Forefeast II* attributed to George

ODE	GENERAL THEME	LOCATION AND FUNCTION	DETAILED CONTENTS OF THE TROPARIA
1	Mary's entrance into the Temple	Gates of the Temple and their personification	1. The Temple opens its gates and adorns itself. 2. Divine graces adorn Mary 3. Humans celebrate
3	Procession of virgins go before Mary	Inside the Temple	1. Preparing and beginning the procession 2. Old shadows and symbols give way to Mary. 3. The good fragrance of Mary's virginity
4	Mary as the dwelling-place of God	Inside the Temple, combined with universal significance	1. Mary as tabernacle – destruction of pagan temples. 2. Mary as bridal chamber 3. Mary as God's bride – Temple as bridal chamber
5	Mary as cloud	Inside the Temple and in the whole creation	1. Typology of Mary as the guiding cloud in the desert 2. Sanctuary receives Mary's good fragrance 3. Natural clouds rejoice together with the spiritual one.
6	Mary as sacrifice	Inside the Temple, combined with a cosmic function	1. Angels overseeing the procession 2. Mary as a sacrifice to undo the transgression of Eden 3. Human race offers Mary as sacrifice
7	Passage from law to grace	Mary's role in salvation history	1. Rivers of grace flowing on earth – Mary as the fountain of living water 2. Mary as God's vehicle in the Temple of law 3. Old types accept Mary as their fulfillment
8	Preparation for the feast	Temple as a bridal chamber, Mary as the bride offered to God	1. Preparation of spiritual lamps for the reception of Mary 2. Mary as God's bridal chamber – sanctuary as Mary's bridal chamber 3. Human race singing a hymn of forefeast
9	Preparation for the feast	Participation of whole humanity to the feast	1. Human race preparing a feast 2. Mary as the rod of Aaron 3. Human race singing a hymn of forefeast

It can also happen that each ode forms a smaller unit inside the 'narrative' of the larger kanon. Such is the situation in *Kanon for the Forefeast II*. Each ode of this kanon begins with two troparia of a more narrative character, while the last theotokion has a more supplicatory or laudatory tone. In addition to this general structure, each ode has a thematic structure. In some of the odes, the succession of the troparia functions in a chiastic way;[60] the first and third troparia of the odes surround the second troparion that includes the most crucial teaching. Such is the case, for example, in the third ode of the kanon that is dedicated to the procession. The first troparion describes how the virgins gather together in order to form the procession:

> Today the choirs of virgins, having prepared their noetic lamps, hasten brightly ahead. Rejoicing, they adorn in advance the entrances of the Temple of God and proclaim the divine coming of the most pure one.

The second troparion, in its turn, reveals the essential message of the event, namely the proclamation of Christ by His mother, and the end of the law:

> The shadows of archaic and obscure symbols pass away and the riddles of the law recede when the Mother of God proclaims Christ our God in the house of His glory, the one Who is the fulfilment of all beings.

Returning to the theme of the first troparion, the third one again describes the groups of virgins, but now presents Mary's majesty as the reason for their gathering:

> O pure one, having drawn to yourself choirs of virgins with the sweet fragrance of your purity, today you prepare them to go before you with longing to the Temple of God as they proclaim you great among mortals and announce your majesty.[61]

In some other odes, however, the ensemble of troparia has a more successive structure. As if symbolising the fall of the forefathers Adam and Eve, the sixth ode of the *Kanon of the Forefeast II* attributed to George begins with angels and their praises for the Entrance:

> Today in the Temple of His glory, the angels, the overseers of God, invoke the God-befitting noetic choir of the forefeast, crying out to the pure one an entrance ode.

that the popularity of the Hodegetria processions from the tenth century onwards would be related with the processional structure of the composition of the icon of the Entrance.

[60] The use of chiasmus in Byzantine hymnography has not been studied to a great extent, but see J. Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1994), 251–62.

[61] Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 282.

In the second troparion, the Theotokos is presented as a reconciler between the human race and paradise; she is the one who delivers us back to enjoy the presence of God, just as the angels do:

> The undefiled one, the supremely honourable offering of the humility of mortals to God prepares to be led forth as reconciliation and the pledge of those who were expelled from Eden for the sake of transgression.

The third and last troparion of the ode brings the focus down on earth to humans, who offer the Mother of God as their sacrifice:

> Humans receive proof now of your fellowship with the Creator of all when they bring you, the birth-giver of God, to Him as an acceptable sacrifice, the first-fruit of their offering.[62]

The Musical Narrative of the Kanons

We have seen how the kanons of the Entrance situate themselves in the cosmological narrative of prefigurations and their fulfilments, and what kind of narrative elements can be found in separate kanons or their odes. But in order to see the big picture it is also necessary to consider the liturgical position of the kanon as a sung hymn. From the system of *contrafacta*, it is useful to point out a phenomenon that could be called 'musical intertextuality',[63] the soundscape created by the musical performance of the hymns. This soundscape reminds the audience of the other liturgical feasts in which the same melodies are used.[64]

This begins, first, with the selection of the modes in which the kanons are composed. If we narrow down our analysis to the feasts of the Mother of

[62] Ibid., 284–5.

[63] As far as I know, this term has not been used before in the context of Byzantine music. It has been, however, introduced into Western art music; see e.g. M. L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005). For a more extensive exploration on the question of musical intertextuality in the case of the feasts of the Theotokos, see my 'Deciphering the Theological Dimensions of Musical and Poetic Intertextuality in Byzantine Hymnography: The Case of the Great Feasts of the Theotokos', in Moody and Roszczenko (eds.), *Creating Liturgically: Hymnography and Music. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Orthodox Church Music, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland, 8–14 June 2015* (Joensuu: International Society for Orthodox Church Music, 2017), 436–45.

[64] This idea was first presented by J. Getcha in his important contribution 'L'utilisation des Automèles en tant que lien entre les différentes fêtes de l'economie du salut dans le rite byzantin', in A. M. Triacca and A. Pistoia (eds.), *L'Hymnographie: Conférences Saint-Serge XLVIe Semaine d'Études Liturgiques* (Rome: CLV-Edizioni Liturgiche, 1999), 179–200, but his study concentrates on the use of *automela* and not *heirmoi.*

God, there might be a deliberate connection of modal intertextuality between the festal kanons of the Dormition (15 August) and Entrance, as both are composed in the first and fourth mode, following partly similar heirmoi; this connection is also apparent in the selection and intertextual discourse of the *prosomoia* or *contrafacta*.[65] The liturgical texts on the Entrance, on a thematic level, do not seem to refer to the events of the Dormition. However, could the connection between these feasts lie in the historical connection of their common celebration? It is known that the events of the Entrance were integrated into the more extensive feast of the Theotokos and different phases of her life in Jerusalem around 15 August: the celebrations of the Kathisma church on 13 August were dedicated to the Entrance.[66] However, this idea must remain a hypothesis, since our knowledge of the historical development of the Entrance, the compilation of liturgical books and the early hymnographic repertoire is not yet fully developed.

Moreover, each ode of a kanon is composed according not only to the poetic, but also the melodic model or heirmos. In some instances, the model melody does not seem to provide any further interpretation to the text, but this is not the case in all of the Entrance kanons. In contemporary liturgical practice, the feast of the Entrance is the first day during the Christmas fast when the heirmoi of the kanon of the Nativity of Christ are sung as katabasiai.[67] The *Kanon for the Entrance III* attributed to Joseph follows these same melodic models; accordingly, the same kanon uses abundant references to the incarnation and the birth of Christ. In other words, the musical performance enhances the message of the text.

Even more apparently, musical intertextuality – which goes together with intertextuality with respect to content – appears in both Joseph's *Kanon for the Forefeast I* and George's *Kanon for the Entrance I*. Both of these poems follow the model melodies of the standard Annunciation kanon, which includes an extensive dialogue between Mary and Gabriel.[68] As a mimesis of this discussion, the eighth odes of these kanons include dialogues between Anna and Zacharias.[69] In order to imitate the prototype even more closely, the Entrance odes include a similar alphabetic acrostic, where each verse commences with a successive Greek letter; accordingly, the ninth ode

[65] For a detailed description of these interrelations, see Olkinuora, *Byzantine Hymnography,* 155–64.

[66] For an extensive study on the early development of the feast of the Mother of God on 15 August, see S. J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Mimouni, *Les traditions anciennes.*

[67] See J. Getcha, *Le Typikon décrypté* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 89.

[68] See n. 55.

[69] *Menaia tou olou eniautou*, 211–12 and 231–2.

includes a reverse acrostic.[70] The literary style of all of these dialogues echoes the earlier tradition of dialogical kontakia, involving emotional responses instead of a merely dogmatic or too high-style rhetorics that might remain too distant to the understanding of simple church-goers;[71] it is also noteworthy that the kanon was performed antiphonally by two choirs, each of which was located on a different side of the church, which led to each choir or chanter taking up one of the characters. This makes the dialogue not only a literary, but also an auditory one.

One could imagine that in such a dialogue, which is not based on earlier apocryphal or biblical narratives, the hymnographer would use the rhetorical device of *ethopoiia* by inventing a discussion between the child and the high priest; however, the Mother of God remains mysteriously silent. It is striking that, in the Entrance kanons, Anna seems to take up a role similar to that of Gabriel in the Annunciation kanon, while Zacharias substitutes for Mary. This parallelism is borne out by their responses. The grandmother of Christ seems more aware of the situation, and she exhorts the high priest with numerous imperatives:

> 'Take the child given to me by God and lead her into the Temple of thy Creator, and sing unto Him with joy: O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.'

On the other hand, the priest seems to wonder at the paradoxality of the event, in a similar way to how Mary, in the Annunciation kanon, wonders how God can fit into her womb:

> 'Thou dost lead here the true Mother of life, whom the prophets of God heralded from afar as the Theotokos: and how shall the Temple contain her? Therefore in wonder I cry: O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.'[72]

[70] This tradition is, actually, a rare one: in the kanons, it is only found in the so-called iambic kanons and the *diodia* that imitate the Annunciation canon. In the framework research project called Hymnography of Constantinople 400–900, hosted by the University of Oslo since 2017, a hypothesis has been presented by Stig Frøyshov that the poems could perhaps be a reworking of an earlier *kata stichon* hymn, where it was customary to begin each short verse with a new alphabet. However, this theory needs more exploration before it can be seen as plausible.

[71] The dialogue structure has received much scholarly attention. It is particularly prominent in Romanos' kontakia; see J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 3. These, in their turn, were influenced by the early poetry of the Near East; see S. P. Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987). See also M. B. Cunningham, 'Dramatic Device or Didactic Tool? The Function of Dialogue in Byzantine Preaching', in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Rhetoric in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-Fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 101–13, for the role of dialogue in Byzantine preaching and hymnography.

[72] *Kanon for the Entrance I* 8.1–2; *Menaia tou olou eniautou*, 231–2, *The Festal Menaion,* 187–8.

Joseph's *Kanon for the Forefeast I* implies a similar setting. It begins with an imitation of the heirmos of the Annunciation kanon: 'Hearken and understand, O wise elder'.[73] Again, Anna is shown to be aware of the role of her daughter as the birth-giver of the incarnate God, when she exhorts the high priest:

> 'Receive, with a brave soul, the pure child that I begot from divine will, for through her will redemption come.'

Zacharias, being aware of the prophecies of the Old Testament – just as Mary, in the kanon of the Annunciation, has been taught to know of the prophecies concerning Christ's incarnation – understands the meaning of this wondrous event, but still remains amazed when the divine economy is revealed. This corresponds to the Theotokos' inner thoughts in the Annunciation kanon, where she is simultaneously perplexed by the divine providence, and also filled by disbelief in the fact it is she who will give birth to Christ, until Gabriel manages to convince her.[74]

One would imagine that the priest, a man of letters and knowledge of God, would be more aware of the situation than Mary's mother. What, then, could be the reason for this juxtaposition? Probably the key here is, again, the mimetic action: Anna is the one who arrives, so she takes up the role of the arriving archangel in the Annunciation. It must also be borne in mind that in many Byzantine churches the icon of the Annunciation is divided on two separate columns on each side of the nave, Gabriel depicted on the left and Mary on the right, just as in most icons of the Entrance Anna arrives from the left and Zacharias awaits her in the right. Thus, while the believers heard the Entrance dialogue being performed with the same melody as the Annunciation kanon, they also saw Gabriel's salutation. Musical intertextuality is, thus, enhanced not only by the 'role-casting' of the poem, but also by the visual impression on the hearer of the performance.

73 *Menaia tou olou eniautou*, 211: Ἄκουε σύνες, πρέσβυτα σοφέ. The phrase from the Annunciation is quoted in the *heirmos* of the same ode: Ἄκουε, Κόρη, Παρθένε ἁγνή ('Hearken, O pure Daughter and Virgin').

74 Actually, the kanon of the Annunciation consists of two poems, attributed to different hymnographers whose names vary in the manuscript tradition; in Sinait. gr. 607 (ninth–tenth c., fol. 97) and Paris. gr. 1563 (twelfth c., fol. 102^{v}) the first part is attributed to Theophanes and the last part to Cosmas, while in the contemporary liturgical books, such as the Roman *Menaion* we use as our source, the attribution of the last part is to John the Monk. The first poem goes on from the first to the seventh ode, and the eighth ode the story begins anew, so Mary becomes convinced twice during the course of the kanon. It is therefore natural that it is the eighth and ninth odes of the kanons of the Entrance, and not whole kanons, that imitate the kanon of the Annunciation. For a fresh reading of the Annunciation kanon, see my paper, 'Tracing Hymnographic Exegesis: (A) Byzantine Canon(s) on the Annunciation' (forthcoming).

Conclusions

Based on the discussion in this chapter, one can easily note how the diversity of narrative elements in Byzantine kanons – whether prominent narrative passages or vague allusions to events in Mary's life – are experienced in their totality. The kanon is not a particularly narrative genre *per se,* but the way in which Byzantine believers formed the narrative image of a liturgically celebrated event happened gradually, as a collection of impressions from different viewpoints and types of sensory inputs. This image consists of a diverse network of cross-references that provides various interpretations to theological themes, complex systems of prefigurations and the employment of multiple temporal layers: the Entrance hymns interact most significantly with other Marian feasts, both in the forms and rhetoric they employ and the themes they present. More generally one can state that kanons – and indeed all Byzantine hymns – offer more complex levels of meaning than meets the eye; mere consideration of their thematic content yields only a superficial understanding of their message.

Instead, hymnography functions in the liturgy on several levels, of which we have only been able to discuss a few in the present chapter. Together with homilies and other texts, hymns share the method of developing theological themes and providing interpretations for the hidden meanings of Scripture, something that is usually foreign to, say, Byzantine iconography, in which symbolism is used but might easily be overlooked by a visually illiterate viewer. On the other hand, as we saw in the second part of the chapter, at least in some cases hymns seem to support the message of iconographic presentations with parallel mental images and dynamic movements as the poem flows from its beginning toward its conclusion. But in addition to the ekphrastic visual impressions, there is also another inextricable aspect to it, namely its musical performance, which makes the message of the text sweeter and more easily perceptible;[75] this carries echoes of other liturgical feasts, especially Marian ones in the case of the Entrance, to the ears of the believers.

The richness of hymnography lies exactly here. When a modern scholar examines all the above-mentioned aspects of Byzantine liturgical poetry – its cross-references to other texts and arts through form, rhetoric and shared themes – it reveals how church-goers participated in the theological

[75] This view is, perhaps most famously, presented by Basil the Great in his *Homily on the First Psalm,* PG 29, 213A: 'O, the wise invention of the Teacher; simultaneously making us sing and learn useful things!'

message of liturgical celebration: their experience was more than merely observing a performance. Believers became involved in the events of the Entrance as a part of the virginal procession, followed the discussion between Anna and Zacharias and praised the Mother of God together with Gabriel, anticipating the Annunciation. At the same time, the didactic functions of hymns helped the faithful to learn how to contextualise these events in salvation history, from the foreshadowings of the Theotokos in the Old Testament to the New Testament fulfilments of the prefigurations exposed in the Entrance. This destruction of spatio-temporal limitations between the believers and the celebrated events was further enhanced by the musical performance of the kanons, making the act of participation through listening an even more embodied experience when dialogues, for instance, were aurally perceived as dialogues. It goes without saying that such a multifaceted approach to hymnography, and especially kanons, is essential for future studies of any Byzantine liturgical feast, its textual material and the spiritual experience of its audiences.

PART III

Preaching Her Story: Narrative Discourse in Homiletics

10 The Coptic *Homily on the Theotokos* Attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem

An Aberrant and Apologetic 'Life' of the Virgin from Late Antiquity

STEPHEN J. SHOEMAKER

Although this text is regularly classed among the early narratives of Mary's dormition and assumption, the Coptic *Homily on the Theotokos* attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem is actually an early example of a *Life*, or *vita*, of the Virgin Mary, and indeed, it is one of the earliest such texts to survive. Today this Marian biography is known in several closely related Coptic versions, and it seems that Coptic was its original language of composition.[1] Unquestionably the homily is not by Cyril of Jerusalem, nor does it bear any clear relation to any of his authentic works. Instead, this homily stands as one among a number of pseudo-Cyrilline homilies that were produced in the early Coptic tradition.[2] Among the most intriguing features of this early Marian biography is its opposition to a belief – apparently held by some in the author's milieu – that the Virgin Mary was an earthly manifestation of some sort of heavenly power. Other related narratives from roughly the same time and place confirm that this interpretation of the Virgin had indeed gained some traction, at least within Egypt at the beginning of the sixth century. After considering the nature of this pseudo-Cyrilline *Homily on the Theotokos* and its place within the tradition of early Marian literature, we will turn in the second part of the chapter to consider the possible significance of this late antique tradition that Mary was a manifestation of a heavenly power. Although several hypotheses for this belief have been proposed, none of these is particularly satisfying, and instead, it seems that the source of this tradition is altogether more mundane than other scholars have imagined.

[1] T. Orlandi, 'Coptic Literature', in B. A. Pearson and J. E. Goehring (eds.), *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 51–81, 79–80.

[2] On this topic, see T. Orlandi, 'Cirillo di Gerusalemme nella letteratura copta', *VetChr* 9 (1972): 93–100; A. Campagnano (ed.), *Ps. Cirillo di Gerusalemme: Omelie copte sulla Passione, sulla Croce e sulla Vergine*, Testi e documenti per lo studio dell'antichità 65 (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1980), 10–14; R. van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem on the Life and the Passion of Christ: A Coptic Apocryphon*, VigChrSupp 118 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 111–20.

Four different manuscripts preserve the homily (one only in part), and while these witnesses seemingly date only to the tenth century,[3] we are fortunate that we can date the text much earlier on the basis of its content. Most important in this regard is the homily's account of the end of Mary's life, an event which it places on the twenty-first day of the Coptic month of Tobe, that is, 16 January in the Western calendar. This of course differs from the now traditional date of Mary's death, 15 August, which was eventually determined for the other churches by the practice of Jerusalem. The precise timing of this commemoration, however, is not the main issue in this instance, particularly since festivals in Mary's honour were observed on a variety of different dates in different places during late antiquity.[4] Instead, the key feature of this homily that allows us to date it with some precision to before the middle of the sixth century is the absence of any account of Mary's resurrection and bodily assumption into heaven.

The homily comes to an end with Mary's death on 21 Tobe, the event that it was written to commemorate, as Christ takes away her soul to dwell with him, leaving her body behind. Then, at Christ's instructions, the apostles begin to process with Mary's body outside the city walls to the traditional location of her tomb in the valley of Jehosaphat. The Jews, however, when they see the funeral procession, decide to seize her body and burn it before the apostles can bury it. When they attack, the apostles scatter, and yet the Jews cannot find her body. It vanishes miraculously, in accordance with Christ's promise to his mother that he would hide her body in the earth, 'until the day of my return, when I will raise it up incorruptible'.[5] The homily makes no mention of Mary's bodily assumption, and it seems fairly clear here and elsewhere in the text that her resurrection in Paradise should not be expected until the general resurrection at the Final Judgement. The same is also true of another set of early Coptic homilies on the Dormition, the two versions of the Sahidic *Homily of the Dormition* attributed to Evodius of Rome.[6] These narratives similarly conclude without Mary's bodily assumption, and its absence from these texts is characteristic of the earliest Coptic commemorations of the end of

[3] The manuscripts are described in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 15–20.

[4] See now S. J. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 134–45, 178–86.

[5] Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 186.

[6] S. J. Shoemaker, 'The Sahidic Coptic Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Attributed to Evodius of Rome: An Edition of Morgan MSS 596 and 598 with Translation', *AB* 117 (1999): 241–83.

Mary's life, which knew only a feast of her Dormition on 21 Tobi without her assumption.[7]

By the middle of the sixth century, however, the Coptic commemoration of Mary's departure from this world evolved to include not only a tradition about her bodily assumption into heaven but also a separate feast in honour of this event. In a liturgical program that is unique to the Coptic Church (and its daughter church in Ethiopia), the celebration of the end of Mary's life begins on 21 Tobe (16 January) with a commemoration of her dormition but reaches its culmination only much later on 16 Mesore (9 August), with a feast in honour of her bodily assumption.[8] In historical terms, the observance of two separate feasts suggests that in its earliest practice the Egyptian church celebrated only Mary's miraculous dormition and believed that she would attain her final reward together with the rest of the righteous at the last day, as indicated in the homilies attributed to Cyril and Evodius. The addition of a feast of the Assumption in mid-August was presumably influenced by the observance of the 15 August feast in Jerusalem, which by the middle of the sixth century had become identified with Mary's dormition and assumption.[9] In narrative terms, this meant that the story had to be extended by another 206 days, a feature that is, again, absent from all non-Coptic tradition about Mary's dormition. Therefore, in the more recent Coptic accounts that include an assumption, the apostles remain at the tomb, guarding it for almost seven months until Christ returns again to reunite his mother's soul and body and take them both to heaven.

The earliest narrative to follow this pattern of two different feasts separated by a 206-day interval is the *Homily on the Assumption* by the famous patriarch of Alexandria, Theodosios (536–67). Scholars are generally agreed that the homily's attribution is authentic and, according to its prologue, Theodosios delivered this discourse in the final year of his life, 566 or 567.[10] Roelof van den Broek even suggests that it was most likely Theodosios himself who introduced this liturgical change. Whether or not this hypothesis is correct, we may be fairly certain that narratives without the double commemoration, like the homily attributed to Cyril, are earlier

[7] S. J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 57–63.

[8] Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 58–9.

[9] Ibid., 121–2. See also S. C. Mimouni, 'Genèse et évolution des traditions anciennes sur le sort final de Marie: Etude de la tradition littéraire copte', *Marianum* 42 (1991): 69–143, 123–33.

[10] On the homily's authenticity, see M. Chaîne, 'Sermon de Théodose, Patriarche d'Alexandrie, sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de la Vierge', *ROC* 29 (1933–4): 272–314; M. van Esbroeck, 'Les textes littéraires sur l'assomption avant le Xe siècle', in F. Bovon (ed.), *Les actes apocryphes des apôtres* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), 265–85, 272.

than the middle of the sixth century. Moreover, as van den Broek further notes, other narrative features of the Cyril homily seem to confirm its composition before this time.[11] Thus, we have in the *Homily on the Theotokos* attributed to Cyril a biography of Mary that was most likely written in Egypt sometime in the first part of the sixth century, if not possibly even a little bit earlier.

At the end of the nineteenth century Forbes Robinson published a fragment of this homily separately, along with three other similar fragments, understanding them to have been part of a larger, now lost, *Life* of the Virgin.[12] Of the four fragments, the one from Cyril's homily is by far the longest, yet two of the others share some very similar content with other parts of Cyril's homily. Accordingly, one wonders whether perhaps all of these fragments once belonged to a larger, more complex literary tradition that included different versions of this homily. I suggest this as a possibility especially in light of the three closely related, yet quite different, versions of the (ps-) Evodius *Homily on the Dormition* that have survived. Presumably, there may have been similar variations in this homiletic biography ascribed to Cyril. Indeed, the first of these Coptic fragments, which identifies its content as the 'the life (ⲉⲡⲃⲓ̈ⲟⲥ) of the Virgin', begins with polemic against those who would profess Mary's bodily assumption into heaven: 'cursed is the one who says that the Virgin was assumed (ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲁⲛⲁⲗⲁⲙⲃⲁⲛⲉ) into heaven in her body'.[13] Given the history of Coptic liturgical celebration of the Dormition, one would imagine that this text too must belong to sometime before the middle of the sixth century. Furthermore, this fragment shares with the Cyril homily, as we shall see, a clear concern to demonstrate Mary's mortality. The fragment then proceeds to relate Mary's conception and birth, although it breaks off just after describing the plans for her upbringing in the Temple. The Cyril homily treats these same topics, although at differing length and with different emphasis. Clearly the narratives are not identical, but again, perhaps they once belonged to a common larger textual tradition. The same is equally true of the second fragment, which concerns Mary's life in the Temple, the annunciation, and the nativity of Christ; these are also important themes in the Cyril homily that appear here in a slightly different formulation.

[11] Van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril*, 96.

[12] F. Robinson, *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels: Translations together with the Texts of Some of Them*, Texts and Studies 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 1–41.

[13] Ibid., 2–5.

The third fragment, however, is quite anomalous, and it does not correspond to any other Marian narrative with which I am familiar. Moreover, the broader context for this peculiar narrative is lacking, which makes it even more difficult to interpret. Leaving aside certain odd details for reasons of space, I will focus on the beginning of the fragment which describes Mary in the midst of a journey; she appears to be on her own, without her son or Joseph, and so presumably this is not the flight into Egypt. Mary orders her mule driver to move ahead, and as they approach an 'image of an alabaster called Elachistes, it [falls] down, and all the other idols of bronze and wood and stone that [are] around it [fall] down before Mary'.[14] After this, Mary rebukes the idols for deceiving the people of the city who eat human flesh. After the idols beg mercy from Mary and seek to blame their wickedness on the devil, she addresses the people of the city, telling them that the idols have deceived them, and with her word she sends all the idols into the abyss. There they will remain until the Day of Judgement, when they will bear witness against those who made them. Mary is then immediately escorted to the 'judgement seat' or 'platform' (ⲡⲃⲏⲙⲁ) somewhere in the city, where her throne has been prepared. After briefly addressing the governor, Mary sits on the judgement seat. With this, we suddenly find ourselves in the midst of what would appear to be an apocalyptic judgement scene. The earth shakes, there is thunder and lightning, and the dead arise and come forth from the tombs. The abyss and its storehouses are revealed, along with its fearsome angels of fire. Michael also appears with his angels, at which point Mary speaks to the dead. 'The mystery is not mine', she says, 'but my son's'. 'Return to your tombs', she instructs them, telling them to await her son's return, which will be soon.[15] Finally, she turns to address the governor again, explaining that he has just beheld the torments of hell. Unfortunately the text breaks off suddenly at this point, leaving us rather mystified. There is nothing quite like this either in the Cyril homily or in any other Marian text to my knowledge; the closest parallels would seem to come from Mary's apocalyptic journey at the conclusion of the earliest dormition narratives.[16] Nevertheless, it would appear that this fragment once belonged to some sort of larger narrative about Mary that was circulating in Coptic during the early Middle Ages.

[14] Ibid., 20–3.

[15] Ibid., 24–5.

[16] Regarding these early Marian apocalypses, see e.g. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 189–203; R. Bauckham, 'The Four Apocalypses of the Virgin Mary', in his *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on Jewish and Christian Apocalypses,* Supplements to Novum Testamentum 93 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 332–62.

(Ps-) Cyril's Narrative of Mary's Life

As for the homily ascribed to Cyril, we quickly learn from its prologue that the question of the Virgin Mary's humanity is going to be an important topic. After an elaborate rhetorical introduction, but before we learn anything about the life of the Virgin, the author alerts us to this theme. The homily identifies its occasion as the feast of Mary's Dormition, noting at the outset that 'This is the day when the Queen, the mother of the King of Life, tasted death like every human being.' Therefore, the homilist explains, 'Ebion' and 'Harpocratius' are put to shame for saying that Mary was instead 'a power from heaven who took on the likeness of a woman and came to earth and was called Mary'.[17] In order to refute this mistaken view, he promises to tell the story of her life as a human being, beginning with her parents and her genealogy, which will prove that she was fully human and not a heavenly power. The author begins by adopting the voice of the Virgin herself, as she relates who her parents were. Her father was Joachim, a name, she explains, that is also interpreted as 'Kleopa', so that she is identified also with Mary of Clopas from John 19:25. Moreover, she further clarifies, rather surprisingly, that she is also Mary Magdalene, because the name of the village in which she was born is 'Magdalia'. As the homily later explains, the particular district of Jerusalem in which Mary had been born was known at the time as Magdalia. And just to round things out, she is likewise Mary the mother of James (Mk 16:1), since she had been placed in the care of James the son of Joseph. Thus, Mary of Nazareth is somehow made out to be not only the mother of Jesus, but also each of the biblical 'Three Marys'.[18]

The narrative begins in Magdalia, where we are introduced first to Mary's paternal grandparents – an unusual added step no doubt intended here to shore up further her complete humanity. Her grandfather was a pious and wealthy man named David and, following a prophetic vision, David conceived with his wife Sarah, Mary's grandmother, a son, whom David named Joachim but Sarah called Kleopas. To him was given as a wife Anna, Mary's mother, who, it turns out, was Joachim's cousin, the daughter of her grandfather David's brother Aminadab.[19] At this point we reach more familiar turf, with the story of Anna's barrenness and Mary's miraculous conception. When Mary turned three, her parents fulfilled their vow to God and delivered her to the Temple, where she spent her childhood. According to this text, Mary remained in

[17] (Ps-) Cyril of Jerusalem, *Homily on the Theotokos* 6–7, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 156.
[18] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 10, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 158–60.
[19] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 13–14, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 160–2.

the Temple until she turned fourteen; this differs from the account in the *Protevangelium of James*, in which she is forced out at the age of twelve. Then, with no mention yet of Joseph, we are told that the angel Gabriel came to Mary and announced to her the good news: this took place, we learn, on the seventh day of the month Parmute, which is 2 April, in the year 5500 (since the creation), and Christ was born on the twenty-ninth day of the month Khiahk, which is 25 December, when Mary was herself fifteen years old.[20]

The flight into Egypt follows, which is always an important theme in Egyptian Christianity. At this point the author anticipates a series of questions from his audience. How did they make such a lengthy journey? What did they eat along the way? The answer, he explains, is to be found in the Bible itself, in the story of Habakkuk from Bel and the Dragon (33–9). One day while Habakkuk was preparing food in Judea, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him to feed Daniel in the lions' den in Babylon. Habakkuk explained that he had neither heard of Daniel before nor been to Babylon, and so he did not see how he could possibly do this. In response, the angel took Habakkuk by the 'crown of his head' and lifted him by his hair, bringing him in an instant to Babylon, where he gave food to Daniel in the lions' den. Then the angel returned him whence he came 'immediately'. The holy family, our author explains, experienced something quite similar on their journey to Egypt. 'If the power of an angel was so great, then how much more the Lord of angels, who came to Egypt lifted up on a swift cloud, according to the scripture: as the prophet Isaiah says: "Behold, the Lord will come to Egypt lifted up on a swift cloud (19:1)."'[21] There Jesus remained for three years with his parents, teaching the Egyptians from his mother's arms, until Herod's slaughter was finished and God called his family to return.

All of this, the author explains, has been elaborated in order to refute the false teaching that Mary was a heavenly power (ⲟⲩⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ). At this point a lengthy excursus intrudes into the narrative of Mary's life, as 'Cyril' explains in some detail his personal confrontation with a heretic who was spreading these blasphemies about the mother of Jesus. The culprit was a monk named Annarichus who lived in the vicinity of Maiouma near Gaza. According to Cyril, Annarichus had acquired this falsehood through instruction in the teachings of Abion and Arpokratios, that is, Ebion and Carpocrates, two early Christian teachers who had been associated with one another in the heresiological literature since Irenaeus.[22] According to the homily,

[20] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 20, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 166.

[21] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 20–1, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 166–8.

[22] A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 136.

Cyril ordered the monk to appear before him in Jerusalem, when the monk also identified Sator, presumably Satornilus, among his teachers. Cyril then asked the monk to explain his beliefs, to which Annarichus responded with a quotation from what he said was the Gospel of the Hebrews. Much of what Annarichus imputes to this gospel is not very controversial, inasmuch as he relates a fairly generic account of Christ's birth, his ministry, his crucifixion and ascension to the Father. Only the beginning is unusual, and here precisely the issue that concerns our homilist jumps to the fore: the idea that Mary is some sort of heavenly power.

According to Annarichus, 'It is written in the Gospel according to the Hebrews that when Christ wished to come upon the earth to humankind, the Father called to a heavenly power who is called Michael[23] and entrusted Christ to him. And the power came down into the world and was called Mary, and Christ remained in her womb for nine months, and then she gave birth to him.'[24] Cyril then asks the monk if he believes that there are five gospels, which the monk then affirms. When Cyril asks him to name the five gospels, he does, beginning with the four canonical gospels and ending with the Gospel of the Hebrews. Cyril then responds: 'What you have said is true. Should we therefore follow the wisdom of the God-hating heretics and reject the wisdom of Christ? For what do the Hebrews want more than to succeed in defiling our reputation?'[25] Cyril continues with further polemics against the Jews, and Annarichus is soon persuaded of his error, repenting and giving Cyril his books so that he can burn them. Cyril then concludes with an extended discourse on the reality of Christ's incarnation, and the consequent necessity that his mother was a human being and not some heavenly power. According to most of the manuscripts, Cyril at one point in his discourse rejects the notion that there could be a fourth person in the Godhead. Nevertheless, one should note that there is no question here of Mary's inclusion within the Trinity. The idea that Mary's heavenly power was part of the Godhead is never in view in the homily, even for Cyril's opponents. Rather, in this instance Cyril rejects any notion that the joining of Christ's humanity to his divinity would necessitate the addition of a fourth person to the Trinity, presumably in this case, his humanity.[26] When the discourse is over, Cyril baptises Annarichus, whose

[23] In some manuscripts, 'Micha'.

[24] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 28, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 170–2.

[25] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 30, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 172.

[26] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 32; see S. Bombeck, 'Pseudo-Kyrillos In Mariam virginem: Text und Übersetzung von Pierpont Morgan M 597, fols. 46–74', *Orientalia* 70 (2001): 40–88, 55 (Copt.) and 78 (Germ.); and E. A. Wallis Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*

previous baptism by the heretics was not valid, and thus the homily brings this peculiar excursus to a close.

With the issue of Mary as a heavenly power then sufficiently settled, the homilist returns to the events of Mary's life. Adopting now the voice of the angel Gabriel, the author turns to Elizabeth, Mary's kinswoman, and her lineage. Elizabeth, we learn, visited Mary regularly while she was dwelling in the Temple. Then the homily skips suddenly over the birth and ministry of Christ, hurrying toward the end of Mary's life with only some brief remarks about her life after the ascension of her son. Mary, we learn, lived with John, as indicated by Christ's instructions from the cross (Jn 19:26–7). In her final years, she worked many miracles and healings, albeit anonymously, since 'she fled from the praise of men'. Nevertheless, she did not completely withdraw from public life, and she continued to guide her son's followers after his departure. As the homilist explains, 'The apostles were bound to her at all times, listening to her proclamation of the Gospel.'[27] Here we find a tradition, albeit very brief, that remembers Mary as the leader of the apostles and the nascent Jerusalem Church in a manner similar to what we find in her earliest complete biography, the *Life of the Virgin* attributed to Maximos the Confessor, a work which dates most likely to the seventh century.[28] Therefore, this homily would appear to offer important confirmation that the idea of Mary's leadership of the

in the Dialect of Upper Egypt (London: British Museum, 1915), 62 (Copt.) and 639 (Eng.). According to Campagnano, this longer version also is extant in the fourth fragmentary codex; see Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 175.

27 (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 38, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 180.

28 See esp. S. J. Shoemaker, 'The Virgin Mary in the Ministry of Jesus and the Early Church According to the Earliest *Life of the Virgin*', *HThR* 98 (2005): 441–67. This earliest Marian biography has been translated from Old Georgian into English in S. J. Shoemaker (trans.), *Maximus the Confessor, The Life of the Virgin: Translated, with an Introduction and Notes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012). Recently, Phil Booth has proposed that this text is instead a work of the tenth or eleventh century; see P. Booth, 'On the *Life of the Virgin* Attributed to Maximus the Confessor', *JTS, n.s.*, 66.1 (2015): 149–203. I have demonstrated why this is highly improbable and introduced new decisive evidence from the manuscript tradition for an earlier date and a Palestinian origin in S. J. Shoemaker, 'The (Pseudo?-)Maximus Life of the Virgin and the Byzantine Marian Tradition', *JTS, n.s.*, 67.1 (2016): 115–42. Nevertheless, I would note that I have never maintained that this text is an authentic work of Maximos, only that scholars of Maximos have not – until only very recently – given serious attention to the possibility that it might in fact be by Maximos; see e.g. S. J. Shoemaker, 'The Georgian *Life of the Virgin* Attributed to Maximus the Confessor: Its Authenticity (?) and Importance', in A. Muraviev and B. Lourié (eds.), *Mémorial R. P. Michel van Esbroeck, S.J., Scrinium* 2 (St Petersburg: Vizantinorossika, 2006), esp. 327–8. I continue to maintain that this *Life of the Virgin* is the earliest complete biography of Mary and was almost certainly composed before the ninth century, most likely, at the monastery of Mar Saba. Renewed attention to the text's manuscript tradition and its paleography leaves this all but certain in my judgement.

early Church was in circulation already in Late Antiquity. The homily then finally turns to the events of Mary's dormition, which was after all the occasion for its composition. Surprisingly, we soon meet Mary Magdalene, who is among a group of virgins that Mary instructs. How her appearance here should be reconciled with Mary of Nazareth's earlier identification as the Magdalene at the beginning of the homily is not clear – the text does not offer any explanation.[29] But throughout this last section, the emphasis remains persistently on Mary's mortality and the necessity that she must, like her son before her, face death. And so she dies, and her body is hidden somewhere by her son, as noted above, awaiting reunion with her soul only along with the rest of the righteous at the Last Judgement.

Such emphasis on Mary's mortality is in fact characteristic of nearly all of the early traditions of Mary's dormition and assumption, particularly since this quality was essential to ensure the complete humanity of the one to whom she gave birth. Although these texts frequently use various euphemisms to refer to Mary's death, such as her 'dormition', we should not miss the reality of her death in these circumlocutions.[30] The early Coptic dormition traditions in particular, however, seem to have underscored this point, and perhaps none more so than the present text, the *Homily on the Theotokos* attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem. Likewise, the idea that Mary was some sort of heavenly power is rejected in other early Coptic dormition narratives; for some reason these two related themes seem to have been prominent in the Mariological discourse of sixth-century Egypt. Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter will consider this intriguing phenomenon, particularly as manifested in this (ps-) Cyrilline homily and its alleged quotation from the Gospel of the Hebrews.

Mary as 'Heavenly Power' in Late Antiquity

Three additional Coptic homilies on the Virgin Mary refute the idea that Mary was a power from heaven: a *Homily on the Theotokos* attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis, a *Homily on the Passion of Christ* ascribed to Cyril of Jerusalem and the previously discussed *Homily on the Dormition* by Theodosios of Alexandria. In the first homily, which Roelof van den Broek dates to the fifth or early sixth century, the homilist, posing as Epiphanius, polemicises against those who maintain that 'if this Virgin is so highly

[29] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Theotokos* 46, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 186.

[30] Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 14.

exalted as this, she cannot then possibly be of this earth, and she cannot have been begotten by a man, but she must have come from heaven'.[31] Likewise, (ps-) Cyril in the Passion homily refers to the beliefs of a certain Anthony the Shoemaker and Severos, both of whom were teaching 'that the Theotokos is a spirit'. Presumably these individuals were contemporaries of the homily's author, who may have come from the same milieu as the author of the (ps-) Cyril *Homily on the Theotokos*.[32] Finally, Theodosios, who was writing in the middle of the sixth century, has Christ explain to his mother, 'I did not want you to taste death but (I wanted) to translate you to the heavens as Enoch and Elias. But even they must also taste death at last. And if this happens to you [sc. an assumption before death], evil men will think that you are a force (ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ) which came down from heaven and that this dispensation (ⲟⲓⲕⲟⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ) happened only in appearance'.[33] Clearly, a belief that Mary was a heavenly power had emerged within sixth-century Egypt, and its spread was of some concern to more orthodox writers. It is difficult to determine, however, where this idea originated and how influential it was in late ancient Christianity.

One important question in this regard is whether or not the purported citation from the Gospel of the Hebrews in the (ps-) Cyrilline *Homily on the Theotokos* actually once belonged to this now lost early Christian gospel or not. According to the most authoritative and frequently consulted English collection of early Christian apocrypha, the two-volume *New Testament Apocrypha* edited by Wilhelm Schneemelcher, this passage should indeed be considered a quotation from the Gospel of the Hebrews, taken from somewhere near the beginning of this early second-century gospel. Georg Strecker, the author of the section on Jewish-Christian gospels in which the Gospel of the Hebrews appears, acknowledges that there is some doubt regarding Cyril's authorship of this particular homily. Yet despite such apparent caution, Strecker nonetheless concludes that the passage should be included in the Gospel of the Hebrews, since 'we know the G[ospel of the] H[ebrews] too little to be able to deny this fragment to it; we are possibly concerned here with a corrupted fragment of the G[ospel of the] H[ebrews] or with a fragment of a corrupted G[ospel of the] H[ebrews]'.[34]

[31] (Ps-) Epiphanius of Salamis, *Homily on the Theotokos*, in Budge (ed.), *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 122 (Copt.) and 701 (Eng.). Regarding the date, see van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril*, 97.

[32] (Ps-) Cyril, *Homily on the Passion* 6, in Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo*, 28. Regarding the shared milieu with the *Homily on the Theotokos*, see van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril*, 118–19.

[33] Theodosios of Alexandria, *Homily on the Dormition*, in Chaîne, 'Sermon de Théodose', 290–1; van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril*, 97.

[34] W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. M. Wilson, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1963–5), vol. 1, 137, 163. Klijn suggests that, despite the

Fortunately, in the most recent update of this collection, which represents a significant overhaul of this revered compendium, this passage is singled out at the very end of the collected fragments of the Gospel of the Hebrews, where it is judged with certitude as not having been part of this ancient Christian gospel.[35] Accordingly, we should not look to the earliest Christian centuries for a context to explain the emergence of this belief about Mary. Undoubtedly, (ps-) Cyril selected this gospel to be the alleged source of this false teaching because it was a well-known 'heretical' gospel from early Christian history, and its attribution to the Hebrews enabled the anti-Jewish rhetoric of the refutation that follows its introduction. The evidence for this aberrant belief about the Virgin Mary's origin (aberrant, at least, in comparison with the broad range of other writings about Mary from Late Antiquity) seems to be specifically located in Egypt during the early sixth century. Nevertheless, it is not at all clear what ideological currents within this milieu would have given rise to such an opinion about Mary.

Van den Broek, who persuasively argues against the quotation's derivation from the ancient Gospel of the Hebrews, seeks instead to locate the tradition's genesis within theologically marginal communities of late ancient Christianity.[36] Specifically, he looks to the so-called Kollyridians, a group described in Epiphanius' *Panarion*, as a likely source for the idea that Mary was believed to be a power from heaven.[37] On the surface of things, this group might seem to provide a good match. In his polemics against the Kollyridians, Epiphanius seeks every opportunity to besmirch these Christians with the accusation that they were worshipping Mary as divine. So persuasive is his rhetoric that most modern scholars have followed Epiphanius to the conclusion that the Kollyridians were in fact worshipping Mary as a goddess, as a kind of Christian continuation of Greco-Roman goddess worship.[38] Van den Broek further notes continued

lateness of the homily in which it is found, it is still possible that this is an authentic reference to the ancient Gospel of the Hebrews; see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 135.

[35] C. Markschies and J. Schröter (eds.), *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, 7. Auflage der von Edgar Hennecke begründeten und von Wilhelm Schneemelcher fortgeführten Sammlung der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen, vol. 1: *Evangelien und Verwandtes* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 606.

[36] R. van den Broek, 'Der Bericht des koptischen Kyrillos von Jerusalem über das Hebräerevanglium', in his *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 142–56.

[37] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 78 and 79, in K. Holl and J. Dummer (eds.), *Epiphanius*, 2nd ed., 3 vols., GCS 25, 31, 37 (Leipzig and Berlin: J. C. Hinrichs and Akademie-Verlag, 1915, 1980, 1985), vol. 3, 452–84.

[38] See e.g. F. J. Dölger, 'Die eigenartige Marienverehrung der Philomarianiten oder Kollyridianer in Arabia', *Antike und Christentum* 1 (1929), 107–42; S. Benko, *The Virgin Goddess: Studies*

references to such a group and their excessive reverence for the Virgin in later sources, where they are often named the 'Marianites' rather than the Kollyridians. Yet their appearance in these later sources is almost certainly an echo of the earlier heresiological tradition, rather than evidence of the Kollyridians' survival. This is all the more likely given the fact that, as we will see in a moment, the Kollyridian veneration of Mary was not 'idolatrous' but instead was typical of the veneration of other holy men and women that was beginning to emerge during the fourth century. Indeed, not long after Epiphanius penned his harangue against these Christians for their veneration of Mary, such practices became the very epitome of orthodoxy. In addition to these alleged connections with the Kollyridians, van den Broek also identifies several references from the fifth century and later that he believes associate the Montanists with belief in Mary's divinity. These connections are rather tenuous, however, and do not seem sufficient to connect the Montanists with Epiphanius' Kollyridians. Even less persuasive is van den Broek's attempt to identify some sort of connection with the so-called 'Borborites'.[39] These two avenues are even less promising than the proposed link with the Kollyridians.

Nevertheless, the Kollyridians almost certainly do not stand behind these sixth-century reports of Christians who believed that Mary was a heavenly power. Despite the success of Epiphanius' defamation of the Kollyridians and their practices, it would be a mistake to follow his distorted diatribes to the conclusion that their practices were tantamount to worshipping Mary 'as a goddess' in some sort of 'revival of paganism in Christian garb', or that they reflect a belief in 'the divinity of Mary', as many previous scholars have concluded. While Epiphanius' report certainly works hard to create the impression that the Kollyridians worshipped Mary in the place of God, his determination to portray them in this way by no means guarantees that his opponents, whoever they may have been, understood their ritual practices in this way. Indeed, it is an altogether different question whether most

in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology, Studies in the History of Religions 59 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 170–95, esp. 173, 190; M. Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption de la Sainte Vierge, étude historico-doctrinale*, ST 114 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), 79–80; R. S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 201; V. Limberis, *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London: Routledge, 1994), 118; L. Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, trans. T. Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 122.

[39] Benko similarly invokes these references to the Montanists in his *The Virgin Goddess*. On their dubious value, however, see C. Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 222.

Christians within the broader context of fourth-century 'orthodoxy' would have considered the Kollyridians' actions to be idolatrous, as the *Panarion* makes them appear, let alone whether they would have understood such practices as the worship of Mary as a goddess, as some modern interpreters have maintained.

According to Epiphanius' *Letter to Arabia*, the Kollyridians 'bake a loaf in the name of the Ever-Virgin and gather together, and they attempt an excess and undertake a forbidden and blasphemous act in the holy Virgin's name, making offerings (*hierougein*) in her name with women officiants'.[40] Epiphanius provides a little more detail when he subsequently considers the Kollyridians as the seventy-ninth heresy of his *Panarion*, explaining that 'these women prepare a certain carriage with a square seat and spread out fine linens over it on a special day of the year, and they put forth bread and offer it in the name of Mary, and they all partake of the bread'.[41] Nevertheless, when we read his extensive denunciations of these Christians and their practices carefully, it becomes quite clear that they were simply venerating Mary in the same way that many Christians had begun to venerate other holy men and women, as I have demonstrated elsewhere.[42] It is in fact Epiphanius who is out of step with 'orthodoxy' here and, as a careful reading of his invective against these Christians reveals, he is opposed not only to this veneration of Mary but to the veneration of any of the saints. Furthermore, one should note that Epiphanius never actually asserts that the Kollyridians professed a belief that Mary was somehow a part of the godhead in the way that Trinitarian Christians had come to understand her son as divine – let alone that she was some sort of heavenly power. Rather, he himself draws the conclusion that they considered her equal to God on the basis of their actions, that is, in offering her veneration. No doubt his opponents, as well as the many other contemporary devotees of the Christian saints, would have understood these ritual practices in an entirely different manner.

Decisive confirmation of this interpretation of the Kollyridians and their rituals comes from one of the earliest narratives of Mary's dormition, the *Six Books Dormition Apocryphon*, a fourth-century text that presently survives

[40] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 78.23.4, Holl and Dummer, *Epiphanius*, vol. 3, 473; F. Williams (trans.), *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, 2 vols., Nag Hammadi Studies, 35–6 (Leiden: Brill, 1987, 1994), vol. 2, 618 (slightly modified).

[41] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 79.1.7, Holl and Dummer, *Epiphanius*, vol. 3, 476.

[42] S. J. Shoemaker, 'Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians, and the Early Dormition Narratives: The Cult of the Virgin in the Later Fourth Century', *JEChrSt* 16 (2008): 371–401, 371–85. See also Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith*, 130–57.

in several Syriac manuscripts copied during the fifth and sixth centuries.[43] There is clearly some sort of link between this early dormition narrative and the Christians that Epiphanius denounces as the Kollyridians. Most telling in this regard are the ritual practices that the *Six Books Apocryphon* enjoins on those communities that used it. Three times in the year there are to be commemorations of Mary at which loaves of bread are offered in her honour and then taken home to be consumed by the faithful. The similarity of these observances with the rituals ascribed to the Kollyridians is unmistakable and, to my knowledge, the only two instances in early Christian literature where we find such ritual practices described are in this dormition narrative and in Epiphanius' excoriation of the Kollyridians. The correspondence is too great to be mere serendipity. Yet there is further confirmation that this text and its practices should be associated with Epiphanius' Kollyridians. In attacking their practices, Epiphanius repeatedly addresses the issue of the end of Mary's life and more specifically the question of her assumption. His concern in this context with Mary's assumption, again, is too persistent to be mere coincidence: there is clearly some connection between the ritual practices that he ascribes to the Kollyridians and belief in Mary's assumption. The combination of both in the *Six Books Apocryphon* provides us, then, with the smoking gun. Therefore, we can confirm from this early dormition narrative that Epiphanius' polemical accusation against the Christians who practiced these rituals, namely, that they considered Mary to be divine, is nothing more than a defamatory, rhetorical invention. Accordingly, we must look elsewhere to understand the sixth-century Coptic tradition that Mary was a heavenly power that came into the world.

Another alternative, most recently proposed by Patricia Crone in a posthumously published article, is that this tradition should somehow be linked with the Qur'an's apparent opposition to those who would place the mother of Jesus within the godhead (Q 5.116).[44] Nevertheless, like so much else in this article, the connections are unfortunately not very persuasive and the conclusions not very sound. Indeed, the article's broader contention, that the Qur'an emerged in the context of some sort of Jewish-Christian group, is untenable in the current state of our evidence.[45] Crone rules out the

[43] Shoemaker, 'Epiphanius of Salamis', 385–401. See also Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith*, 130–57, esp. 152–7, which adds important new evidence to this argument.

[44] P. Crone, 'Jewish Christianity and the Qur'ān (Part One)', *JNES* 74 (2015): 245–53. Van den Broek also suggests this connection, albeit very briefly; see van den Broek, 'Der Bericht', 153.

[45] See, for instance, S. J. Shoemaker, 'Jewish Christianity, Non-Trinitarianism, and the Beginnings of Islam', in F. del Río Sánchez (ed.), *Jewish Christianity and Early Islam* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 105–16.

Kollyridians, since the chronological distance between Epiphanius' report and the Qur'an is too great. She also considers the tradition in early Syriac Christianity of identifying the Holy Spirit as feminine and as 'mother' as a possible basis. Indeed, one passage that actually seems to derive from the Gospel of the Hebrews has Christ say, 'Even so did my mother, the Holy Spirit, take me by one of my hairs and carry me away to the great mountain of Tabor.'[46] Nevertheless, Crone rejects this tradition as a source because this divine mother, who is often named the mother of Christ, is never specifically identified with the woman Mary (although one should note that the Qur'anic passage in question speaks only of Christ's mother, not Mary). A few modern scholars have attributed the emergence of this teaching about Mary to Miaphysite Christians, and more specifically to those of a Julianist or Aphthartodocetist persuasion. This is certainly a possibility, but the evidence adduced so far is too tenuous to be convincing.[47]

Instead, Crone turns to the Coptic traditions that we have considered here, and especially to (ps-) Cyril's alleged citation from the Gospel of the Hebrews. These sources, she maintains, reveal the source of the belief that the Qur'an opposes, and although at the time this doctrine was espoused by Christians within the 'mainstream' church, the idea was of Jewish-Christian origin. Yet the evidence that this idea can somehow be assigned to a Jewish-Christian group is improbable and unwarranted. Not only does Crone fail to establish a convincing connection, but Jewish-Christianity as a sectarian phenomenon does not seem to have survived past the fourth century.[48] The

[46] Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, 164. The citation comes from Origen's *Commentary on John* 2.12.

[47] This hypothesis was first proposed, it would seem, in Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 132–3, and then followed by E. Testa, 'Lo sviluppo della "Dormitio Mariae" nella letteratura, nella teologìa e nella archeologìa', *Marianum* 44 (1982): 316–89, 346–52, 357–69; E. Testa, 'L'origine e lo sviluppo della Dormitio Mariae', *Augustinianum* 23 (1983): 249–62. Its most thorough exposition comes from Mimouni, in S. C. Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie: Histoire des traditions anciennes*, Théologie Historique 98 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995), 666–71. Mimouni is then followed on this point by B. E. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998), 7–11, and M. Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 43–5. See also D. Krausmüller, 'Timothy of Antioch: Byzantine Concepts of the Resurrection, part 2', *Gouden Hoorn* 2 (2011), last accessed May 2016, https://goudenhoorn.com/2011/11/28/timothy-of-antioch-byzantine-concepts-of-the-resurrection-part-2/. For a critique of this hypothesis, see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 261–8.

[48] See e.g. J. E. Wansbrough and G. R. Hawting, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), p. vii; R. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Leiden: Brill, 1988) – the title says it all. Even Bellarmino Bagatti, whose optimism about the possibility of recovering information

only possible link would be (ps-) Cyril's alleged citation of the Gospel of the Hebrews, which Crone, wisely, does not press, undoubtedly in light of the many questions about the passage's authenticity. Most probably, these four homilies bear witness instead to an opinion about Mary that was confined to Egypt during the sixth century. The source of its inspiration admittedly remains something of a mystery, and perhaps earlier traditions about the Spirit as mother and certain developments within Miaphysite Christianity made a contribution. Likewise, the gnostic texts found at Nag Hammadi and other related texts frequently feature various female powers in the heavens; possibly some sort of residue from these early Christian traditions added to the mix. Yet these gnostic texts were copied in the fourth century, and the floruit of the groups whose beliefs they reflect was earlier still. Moreover, nothing in these texts corresponds exactly with what we encounter in these homilies.

The most probable explanation for the emergence of this belief, I think, comes from these very homilies themselves, and more specifically, the homily attributed to Epiphanius. There, the author describes those who held this doctrine as maintaining that 'if this Virgin is so highly exalted as this, she cannot then possibly be of this earth, and she cannot have been begotten by a man, but she must have come from heaven'.[49] Mary's increasing exaltation in Late Antiquity could certainly have led some Christians to the conclusion that she was somehow different from the rest of humankind and had some sort of heavenly origin. The early dormition narratives, for instance, strongly emphasise the exceptional purity of Mary's body, in life and in death, and accordingly her flesh merits a special exemption from the corruption of the grave. It was unthinkable that this body, which had remained so pure in life, would at death lie decaying in the grave. The orthodox solution came in Mary's death followed by the glorious resurrection of her body and its transfer to Paradise.[50] Perhaps these same ideological currents that were concerned about Mary's holiness and purity also manifested themselves in other more heterodox theological formulations, such as we find in these Coptic homilies. The orthodox tradition's acclamation of Mary's unique holiness certainly could lead in

concerning the Jewish Christians is perhaps unrivalled, concludes that by the early fifth century Jewish Christianity had disappeared; see Bagatti, *Church from the Circumcision*, 143–7. See also the important critique of Bagatti's work raised by Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 5–47.

49 (Ps-) Epiphanius, *Homily on the Theotokos*, in Budge (ed.), *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts* 122 (Copt.) and 701 (Eng.).

50 See e.g. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 198.

this direction, and indeed, within more recent times we can identify two theological movements reminiscent of the ideas that we encounter in these homilies: the Sophiology of Russian Orthodox theologians at the beginning of the twentieth century risked seeking a place for Mary in the Godhead, while the Roman Catholic investigations that culminated in the doctrine of the Assumption often toyed with the idea of Mary's immortality.[51]

Presumably, the position opposed by the Qur'an, which saw in Mary one of two 'gods apart from God', arose in similar fashion. It is not at all certain, in my opinion, that anyone in the Qur'an's milieu actually held such a belief. Indeed, it is likely that the Qur'an's author(s) has simply misunderstood the exaltation of Mary among the Christians in its audience. For outsiders not familiar with the intricacies of Mary's role in Christian theology, it would be easy to arrive at the mistaken conclusion that Christians believed that Christ's mother was divine, particularly since they believed this about both him and his Father. But it is certainly possible that something similar to what we find in (ps-) Cyril's homily stands behind the Qur'an's polemic. Perhaps such beliefs emerged anew within the Qur'an's sectarian milieu, or possibly there may have even been some sort of connection between the Qur'an and the circulation of this idea within sixth-century Egypt. Yet either case would require an understanding of the Qur'an's composition that is very different from the traditionally accepted account of its production. This tradition from late ancient Egypt certainly does not support a claim that the Qur'an emerged alongside of a Jewish-Christian community. Instead, the most plausible explanation, I propose, is that the increasing emphasis on Mary's unmatched holiness in late ancient Christianity led some to the conclusion, both in late ancient Egypt and in the milieu that gave rise to the Qur'an, that she must have had a heavenly origin or some sort of divine status.

[51] For examples of Mary's status in Russian Sophiology, see S. Bulgakov, *The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God*, trans. T. A. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009); and S. Bulgakov, *Sophia, The Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology*, trans. B. Jakim (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1993). Regarding the immortalist position about the end of Mary's life in the Catholic Assumption doctrine, see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 10–17.

11 Mary as 'Scala Caelestis' in Eighth- and Ninth-Century Italy

FRANCESCA DELL'ACQUA

I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations;
therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

(Ps 45:17)

Maria Virgo Assumpta est

Between 1287 and 1288, in the cathedral of Siena dedicated to Mary, the most important window in the apse, an oculus measuring almost 6 m in diameter, came to be embellished with a stained-glass roundel designed and painted by Duccio di Buoninsegna, the most celebrated Siennese painter of the time (Figure 11.1).[1] The iconography of the roundel is focused on Mary, the main protector of the wealthy city since 1260.[2] In three panels on the vertical axis of the roundel, from bottom to top, three scenes have Mary as the main protagonist: her funeral in which Christ is shown blessing his mother,[3] her Assumption in a mandorla of light lifted by angels and finally her coronation, that is, the acquisition of a royal status at the side of her Son and Bridegroom, with whom she shares a large throne.[4] In the corners are the four evangelists with their symbols, while on the sides of the central row

[1] The stained glass was attributed to Duccio by E. Carli, *Vetrata duccesca* (Florence: Electa, 1946). This has been confirmed by recent studies and conservation-related diagnostics; see A. Bagnoli and C. Tarozzi (eds.), *Duccio. La vetrata del duomo di Siena e il suo restauro* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2003).

[2] In 1260, before venturing in the battle of Montaperti against Florence, the citizens of Siena put themselves under the protecting robe of the Virgin, who allegedly granted them the victory; see D. Webb, *Patrons and Defenders: The Saints in the Italian City States* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), 251–75; G. Parsons, *Siena, Civil Religion and the Sienese* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2004), 2–12. Exemplary of the Siennese devotion to Mary is St Bernardino, who entrusted his life to her; see D. Solvi, 'Bernardino da Siena: una santità mariana?', in A. Bartolomei Romagnoli and F. Frezza (eds.), *Amicitiae sensibus: Studi in onore di don Mario Sensi* (Foligno: Accademia fulginia, 2011), 371–90, esp. 375–6.

[3] The *animula* of the Virgin, i.e. the personification of her soul, would be represented in the corresponding scene of the altarpiece for the main altar of the cathedral of Siena that Duccio painted a few years later (1308–11).

[4] In Orcagna's marble altarpiece for Orsanmichele in Florence (1359), the migration was condensed into two scenes: the funeral and the Assumption in a mandorla of light lifted by

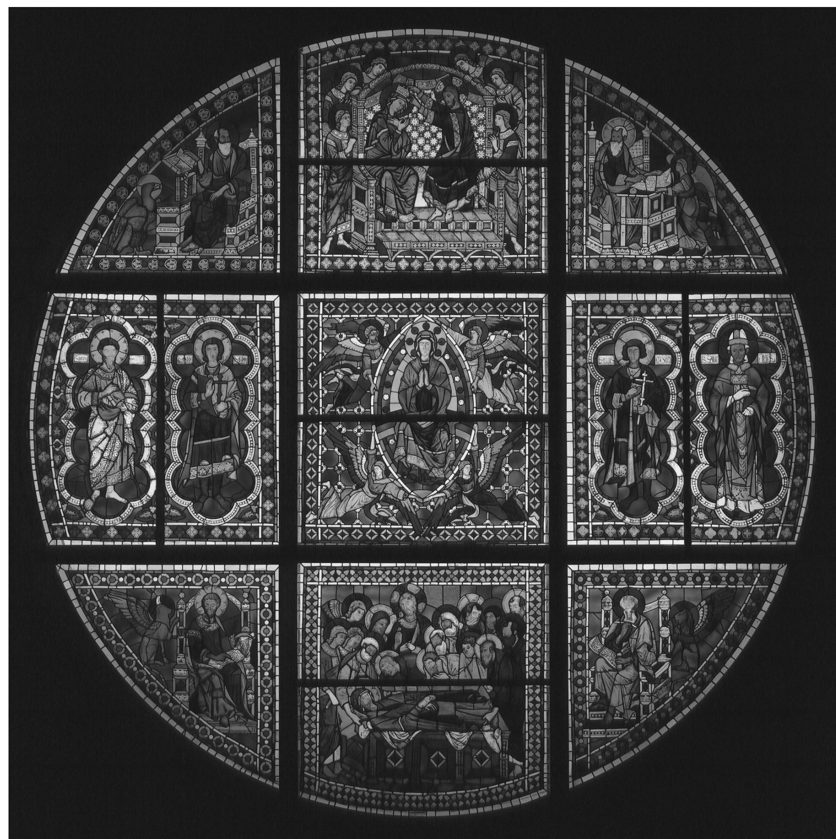

Figure 11.1 Duccio di Buoninsegna, late thirteenth century, stained-glass roundel, diameter ca. 6 m, Siena, cathedral, apse (photo: © Opera della Metropolitana, aut. no. 567/2016).

are the apostle Bartholomew and three patron saints of Siena: Crescentius, Ansanus, Savinus. The evangelists are here to testify the importance of Mary's role in the history of salvation, while the patron saints of the city, like members of her courtly entourage, share with her the role of protecting the city. The scenes featuring Mary clearly are the visual and conceptual pivots of the iconographic programme of the roundel, as they visualise three topical moments of her departure from terrestrial life. Illuminated as they are by the light passing through the oculus, these scenes certainly attracted the attention of the beholder attending liturgical services. At the same time, presenting a visual sequence from physical death to eternal glory, they invited spectators to meditate upon Mary's exemplary modest – though

angels, see B. Cassidy, 'The Assumption of the Virgin on the Tabernacle of Orsanmichele', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988): 174–80.

exceptional – existence and passing, and must have exerted an uplifting effect (Figure 11.2). This stained-glass roundel literally crystallises how the *transitus* of Mary from earth to heaven was interpreted and visualised in the late Middle Ages in a city of a strong Marian devotion such as Siena.[5] But one wonders how Mary's *transitus* and Assumption into heaven were understood and represented in earlier centuries, which aspects were eventually illustrated, and what led to the formation of the glorious late medieval Assumption scene, featuring Mary sitting on her own throne, encircled in a mandorla of light. In order to answer these questions, visual evidence needs to be sifted and connected to the East–West circulation of theological ideas, narrative traditions, liturgical texts and mental images of Mary during the early Middle Ages. In particular the image of Mary as 'ladder to heaven' in the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm, with the echoes that it had in the West, will be relevant to this chapter, since it is *then* that Mary became focal in theological discourse, and in liturgical and devotional practices.

Migration to Heaven

The idea of the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven has been debated for centuries, but was not established as dogma by the Pope until 1950. Not having been described by the Gospels but only in apocryphal narratives, it did not have an exegetical tradition. It has been noted that this might have contributed to a certain freedom in its conceptual, narrative and even figural developments.[6] On this occasion it is not possible even to summarise the early, utterly intricate narrative traditions about Mary's departure from terrestrial life.[7] Originating in the East, they reached the West quite early, in some cases having been incorporated into hagiographical texts, or into

[5] The sequence of *Dormitio*, Assumption and Coronation would be replicated one century later in the murals of the chapel of the Holy Girdle (1392–5) in another Tuscan mercantile town; see J. K. Cadogan, 'The Chapel of the Holy Belt in Prato, Piety and Politics in Fourteenth-Century Tuscany', *Artibus et Historiae* 30.60 (2009): 107–37, esp. 114–17. On the origins of the iconography of the Coronation, connected to early Gothic art, see P. Verdier, 'Suger a-t-il été en France le créateur du thème iconographique du couronnement de la Vierge?', *Gesta* 15.1–2 (1976): 227–36; P. Verdier, *Le couronnement de la Vierge: Les origines et les premiers développements d'un thème iconographique* (Montreal: Institut d'études médiévales; Paris: Vrin, 1980).

[6] J.-C. Schmitt, 'L'exception corporelle: A propos de l'Assomption de Marie', in J. Hamburger and A.-M. Bouché (eds.), *The Mind's Eye. Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 151–85, esp. 152.

[7] M. Jugie, 'La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge dans la tradition des cinq premiers siècles', *EO* 25 (1926): 5–20, esp. 5, n. 2; M. Jugie, 'La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge

Figure 11.2 Duccio di Buoninsegna, late thirteenth century, stained-glass roundel, detail of the Dormition, Assumption, Coronation of the Virgin, Siena, cathedral, apse (photo: © Opera della Metropolitana, aut. no. 567/2016). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

homilies later translated into Latin. Narratives about Mary's *transitus* from the terrestrial to the celestial life might also have circulated orally, thanks to pilgrims returning from the Holy Land. This could explain the earliest known visual renderings of the event. On a fourth-century sarcophagus found in the church of Santa Engracia in Zaragoza (Aragon), carved in deep relief, the front presents Mary standing among the apostles and raising her right hand to clutch a hand appearing from above and ready to draw her up to heaven.[8] A piece of white linen brocade from the treasury of the cathedral of Sens, comparable to Merovingian textiles dated between the late sixth and the eighth centuries,[9] presents Mary standing in the *orans* posture, flanked by two angels, while floating above the apostles, who each raise one arm towards Mary to acclaim her glorious migration to heaven (Figure 11.3). The inscription in Latin running between the double *rotae* which encircle the scene makes a clear reference to the event of the Assumption.[10] It should be noted that the earliest written reference in the West about Mary's Assumption is to be found in an acclaimed hagiographical text, the *De gloria martyrum* by Gregory of Tours (d. 594). He presents in two adjacent chapters the ascension of Christ and the Assumption of Mary, thus crafting an evocative textual diptych which implicitly endorses the idea of an indissoluble union between Mother and Son and a similar destiny after their terrestrial life.[11] It is not known if the Assumption was

dans la tradition des cinq premiers siècles (suite)', *EO* 25 (1926): 129–43; M. Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge: Étude historico-doctrinale,* ST 144 (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944); M. van Esbroeck, 'Les textes littéraires sur l'Assomption avant le Xe siècle', in F. Bovon et al. (eds.), *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres: Christianisme et monde païen* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), 265–85; S. C. Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie: Histoire des traditions anciennes*, Théologie historique 98 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995), 13–21; S. C. Mimouni, *Les traditions anciennes sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de Marie: Études littéraires, historiques et doctrinales,* VigChrSupp 104 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011); S. J. Shoemaker, 'The Cult of Fashion: The Earliest "Life of the Virgin" and Constantinople's Marian Relics', *DOP* 62 (2008): 53–74; P. Booth, 'On the *Life of the Virgin* Attributed to Maximus the Confessor', *JTS* n.s. 66.1 (2015): 149–203.

[8] Cf. H. Leclercq, s.v. 'Assomption dans l'art', in F. Cabrol (ed.), *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1924), vol. 1.2, 2983–95, esp. 2990–4; cf. Jugie, 'La mort et l'Assomption', 14; J. Hecht, 'Die frühesten Darstellungen der Himmelfahrt Mariens', *Das Münster* 4.1–2 (1951): 1–12, esp. 7. See also N. Büchsenschütz, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, vol. 4. Iberische Halbinsel und Marokko* (Berlin: Reichert, 2018), 62–3.

[9] S. Desrosiers and A. Rast-Eicher, 'Luxurious Merovingian Textiles Excavated from Burials in the Saint Denis Basilica, France in the Sixth-Seventh Century', *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings, 2012, Paper 675*, http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/675, 1–8, esp. 2.

[10] E. Chartraire, 'Une représentation de l'Assomption de la très sainte Vierge au VIIIe siècle', *Revue de l'art chrétien*, s. 4. 8 (1897): 227–9. I further discuss this fragment of fabric in the chapter on the Assumption of Mary in my forthcoming monograph *Iconophilia: Religion, Politics, and Sacred Images in Italy, c.680–880*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies.

[11] Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, chs. 3–4, ed. B. Krusch, MGH *SRM* 1, 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1885), 39; trans. R. van Dam: Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, TTH

Figure 11.3 Assumption, late sixth–eighth century, linen brocade, 65 × 80 cm, Sens, Trésor de la Cathédrale de Sens, inv. no. TC B 283 (photo: E. Berry © Musées de Sens).

already celebrated in the West when Gregory was writing, as he does not make mention of the feast. Only about a century later the *Book of Pontiffs*, under the rubric of Pope Sergius I (687–701), mentions the feast of the

3 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), 4. About Gregory's possible Syriac source, conventionally referred to as *Obsequies of the Holy Virgin*, which offers the earliest mention of Mary's resurrection, see A. Wilmart, 'L'Ancien Récit latin de l'Assomption', *Analecta Reginensia: Extraits des manuscrits latins de la Reine Christine conservés au Vatican*, ST 59 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933), 323–62; Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption*, 108, 112; van Esbroeck, 'Les textes littéraires', 270; Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie*, 78–86; Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 33. On Gregory of Tours' awareness of Byzantine sources, see A. Cameron, 'Byzantine Sources of Gregory of Tours', *JTS* n.s. 26.2 (1975): 421–6. About Christ and Mary sharing a similar destiny, see Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption*, 6–7.

Assumption and its solemn vigil procession in the streets of Rome.[12] From there, the feast became widespread in the West.[13] Nevertheless, no early Latin homily is extant for this feast aside three dubious homilies for the feast in the homiliary collated by Alanus abbot of Farfa (d. 769),[14] and the one composed by Ambrosius Autpertus (d. 784), a monk and later abbot of San Vincenzo al Volturno, a filiation of Farfa.[15] Therefore it is likely that the Greek homiletic tradition, which flourished between the late seventh and the mid-eighth century, must have attracted attention and offered a reference. A later witness to this is a late ninth-century translation of Greek homilies on the Dormition by notable authors such as Andrew of Crete, Germanos of Constantinople, John of Damascus and Kosmas Vestitor. It has been argued that these homilies were translated at the papal court by Anastasius Bibliothecarius (better known for having translated the *Corpus Dionysiacum*), and later disseminated in Carolingian monasteries.[16]

Homilies, which have a primary role in transmitting theological assumptions, beliefs and ecclesiastical policies to the faithful, should be acknowledged as important influences on the development and dissemination of mental images and therefore on the creation of new textual and figural images.[17] In the second homily of a trilogy dedicated to the Dormition,

[12] *The Book of Pontiffs*, *Life of Sergius I*, 86.14, in L. Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber pontificalis: Texte, introduction et commentaire* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1955, 2nd ed.), vol. 1, 376; R. Davis (ed.), *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, TTH 6 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 84. On the procession held for more than seven centuries on the vigil of the Assumption, see G. Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani: Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1990), 38–44; P. Helas and G. Wolf, *Die Nacht der Bilder: Eine Beschreibung der Prozession zu Maria Himmelfahrt in Rom aus dem Jahr 1462* (Freiburg i. Br.: Rombach Verlag KG, 2011), 13–28.

[13] For Anglo-Saxon England, see M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25–47.

[14] In fact, one was originally for the Annunciation (Pseudo-Augustinus, *Sermo 194*), one on the Assumption (Pseudo-Ildephonsus, *Sermo 7*) and one in Mary's praise (Pseudo-Ildephonsus, *Sermo 8*). See R. Grégoire, *Homéliaires liturgiques médiévaux: Analyse de manuscrits* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1980), 128 and 178–9. There is no modern edition yet of Alanus' homiliary.

[15] Ambrosius Autpertus, *Homily on the Assumption of Mary*, CCCM 27B, ed. R. Weber (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), 1027–36.

[16] Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, ms. Augiensis LXXX; *Sermones in Dormitionem Mariae. Sermones Patrum Graecorum praesertim in Dormitionem Assumptionemque beatae Mariae Virginis in Latinum translati, ex codice Augiensi LXXX (saec. XI)*, CCCM 154, ed. A. P. Orbán (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000); see A. Wenger, 'Les homélies inédites de Cosmas Vestitor sur la Dormition', *REB* 11 (1953): 284–300, esp. 285–6; M. Cupiccia, 'Anastasio bibliotecario traduttore delle omelie di Reichenau (Aug. LXXX)?', *Filologia mediolatina* 10 (2003): 41–102.

[17] M. B. Cunningham and P. Allen (eds.), *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

the iconophile bishop of Gortyna, Andrew of Crete, explicitly derived the vivid literary image of Mary lying on her funeral couch surrounded by the apostles singing hymns in her praise from the third chapter of Pseudo-Dionysius' *On the Divine Names*. Already in the *scholia* written by John of Scythopolis a few decades later, in the first half of the sixth century, the passage was interpreted as a reference to Mary's *transitus*.[18] Being regarded as one of the few authoritative sources concerning her mysterious passing, Dionysius' account had a wide circulation in the East and in the West.[19] Although succinct, the account is so effective in presenting the Virgin's funeral that it can be regarded without doubt as an important inspiration for figural images. In the same homily on the Dormition, Andrew appeals to his audience and invites them to look at (probably mental) images of the episode: 'For before the gaze of those who look on holy things with faith, there stand here clear images (εἰκόνες), eloquent representation of my [Mary's] passing. This tomb is that one carved out of rock, which stands intact even today, proclaiming with soundless voice the evidence of my [Mary's] burial.'[20] In the West the Assumption had been rendered sporadically in visual media since the fourth century, but it only became more frequent between the eighth and the ninth centuries.[21] In the East no early images of the Dormition survive. This absence might be explained by a thorough, although unlikely, destruction of all earlier images, or by admitting that an interest in visualising Mary's *transitus* might not have

[18] Andrew of Crete, *On the Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Mother of God* 2.9, PG 97, 1062A, for the reference to Pseudo-Dionysius, see 2.16, PG 97, 1069B and 3.2, PG 97, 1092A; trans. B. J. Daley, *On the Dormition. Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998), 127–8, 133 and 138. Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names* 3.2, PG 3, 681C–684A; B. R. Suchla (ed.), *Corpus Dionysiacum* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 14, 1–17; *Scholia*, PG 4, 236C; B. R. Suchla (ed.), *Ioannis Scythopolitani prologus et scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae librum De divinis nominibus cum additamentis interpretum aliorum*, Patristische Texte und Studien 62 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 202.9–204.5. For a further discussion I address to F. Dell'Acqua, 'Pseudo-Dionysius and the Dormition of the Virgin Platytéra ('Wider than the Heavens')', in F. Dell'Acqua, E. S. Mainoldi (eds.), *Pseudo-Dionysius and Christian Visual Culture, c.500–900*, New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture (London: Palgrave, forthcoming).

[19] Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption*, 134; S. J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 25–71; Shoemaker, 'The Cult of Fashion', 54, and his *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven and New York: Yale University Press, 2016); S. P. Panagopoulos, 'The Byzantine Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption', *SP* 63 (2013), 343–50, esp. 346.

[20] Andrew of Crete, *On the Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Mother of God* 2.7, PG 97, 1056D; trans. Daley, *On the Dormition*, 124.

[21] Leclercq, s.v. 'Assomption dans l'art', 2990.

risen before or during the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm,[22] when Mary's role in the incarnation and in the history of salvation was exalted in order to support the iconophile cause. In murals painted in Cappadocian cave churches between the seventh (?) and tenth centuries and on exquisite Constantinopolitan ivories carved in the late tenth, the migration of Mary to heaven seems essentially focused on her dormition or κοίμησις essentially as described by Dionysius, although adding an element which was not in Dionysius but in the 'Bethlehem' apocryphal tradition of the event: her Son, among the apostles, lifts her *animula* up to heaven.[23]

The *Scala Caelestis* in Early Medieval Italy

At this point, it is necessary to explore how Mary *assumpta* ('taken up to heaven') came to be defined as the 'scala caelestis', connecting the earth to heaven, and how she came to be visualised as such in early medieval Italy. Among the earliest known representations of the *Assumpta* is one painted

[22] I. Kalavrezou, 'Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became *Meter Theou*', *DOP* 44 (1990): 165–72, about the promotion of the motherhood of Mary and the increasing importance of her images after Iconoclasm.

[23] Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 37–8, 52, about the two main traditions on the Dormition, i.e. the 'Palm' narratives, which mention Christ and Michael, and the 'Bethlehem' narratives, which mention Christ but not Michael. To name only a few among the earliest examples in Cappadocia: the Ağaçaltı Kilisesi or Daniel Pantonassa Church in the Ihlara Valley in Cappadocia; see N. Thierry, 'La Cappadoce de l'Antiquité au Moyen Age', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Moyen-Age* 110.2 (1998): 867–97, esp. 894–6; C. Jolivet-Levy, *La Cappadoce médiévale: Images et spiritualité* (Paris: Zodiaque, 2001), 306; the Açıkel Ağa Kilisesi of Belisırma, see C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords* (Paris: CNRS, 1991), 327–8; St John or Ayvalı Kilisesi in the Güllü Dere, Çavuşin, see N. Thierry, *Haut moyen-âge en Cappadoce: Les églises de la région de Çavuşin* (Paris: Institut François d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1994), vol. 2, 399; the 'New Church' of the Tokalı Kilisesi or Buckle Church or St Basil in Göreme, see A. Wharton Epstein, *Tokalı Kilise: Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), 23–32, esp. 25–6; Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce*, 96, 102, 108. The ivory plaques, dated to the late tenth century, are the one mounted on the cover of the Gospels of the German emperor Otto III (Munich, BSB, clm 4453), and the other on a *Lectionarium* (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek, cod. Guelf. 84.5 Aug. fol.), see R. Kahsnitz, 'Koimesis – dormitio – assumptio. Byzantinisches und Antikes in den Miniaturen der Liuthargruppe', in P. Bjurström and N.-G. Hökby (eds.), *Florilegium in honorem Carl Nordenfalk octogenarii contextum*, Nationalmusei skriftserie N.S. 9 (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1987), 91–122, esp. 98–9; Schmitt, 'L'exception corporelle', 156. For a recent appraisal on the figural depiction of the Dormition, see M. De Giorgi, *Il transito della Vergine: Testi e immagini dall'Oriente al Mezzogiorno medievale* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2016).

in the apse of a subterranean, probably funerary chapel in the important monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno in central Italy, called 'crypt of abbot Epiphanius'. The 'crypt' lies beneath Santa Maria in insula, one of the churches of the ninth-century monastery, and preserves one of the most important painted cycles in early medieval Italy.[24] Abbot Epiphanius (824–42) is depicted with a square halo (indicating he was still alive or recently deceased) while kneeling at the feet of the Crucifix. Recent investigations have made clear that his portrait was added to the Crucifixion, therefore this scene as well as the majority of the others in the cycle were either painted before his abbacy or completed under it.[25] The Virgin and Christ are the visual and theological core of the programme, which is developed along two axes crossing on Christ.[26] It is focused on concepts highly praised in the monastic milieu, such as humility and obedience, in this case witnessed by Mary, the deacon-martyrs Stephen and Lawrence, and the wise virgins.[27] In the apex of the vault appears an imposing, enthroned Christ, aligned with a *fenestella confessionis* connecting the 'crypt' to the church above (Figure 11.4). Below him, in the conch of the apse, the Virgin is sitting on a throne encircled by a blue halo enhanced by a double rim in purple red and blue (Figure 11.5). She wears royal robes, a crown and a large gold-yellow halo. She also holds an open book with a quotation from the Magnificat (Lk 1:48): 'For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed' ('Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes') (Figure 11.6). With these words Mary addressed her cousin Elizabeth after the Annunciation, when she was informed that she would become the mother of the Son of God. The throne, the crown and the five archangels paraded in the lower section of the vault as celestial guardians undoubtedly contribute to presenting her as the queen of heaven above the angels – after her *transitus* from terrestrial to celestial life. When compared to the smallness of the 'crypt', the dimensions of the painted Mary are overwhelming for the beholder. Moreover, in being emphasised by two outer rims in purple

[24] J. Mitchell, 'The Crypt Reappraised', in R. Hodges (ed.), *San Vincenzo al Volturno: The 1980–86 Excavations*, Archaeological Monographs of the British School at Rome 7 (Rome: British School at Rome, 1993), 75–114; F. Dell' Acqua, 'Ambrogio Autperto e la Cripta di Epifanio nella storia dell'arte medievale', in F. Marazzi (ed.), *La cripta dell'abate Epifanio a San Vincenzo al Volturno: Cento anni di studi e ricerche* (Cerro a Volturno: Volturnia Edizioni, 2013), 27–47.

[25] I thank Sara Marazzani and Vincenzo Gheroldi, for having shared the results of their yet unpublished archaeometrical analyses, September 2017.

[26] A. Peroni, 'Testi e programmi iconografici: Ambrogio Autperto da San Vincenzo al Volturno a San Pietro al Monte sopra Civate', in A. Calzona et al. (eds.), *Immagine e ideologia: Studi in onore di Arturo Carlo Quintavalle* (Milan: Electa, 2007), 138–50.

[27] R. Deshman, 'Servants of the Mother of God in Byzantine and Medieval Art', *Word and Image* 5 (1989): 33–70, esp. 44.

Figure 11.4 Christ in majesty, 824–42, mural painting, former monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno (Isernia), 'Crypt' of abbot Epiphanius, vault (photo: Francesca Dell'Acqua).

Figure 11.5 Mary assumpta, 824–42, mural painting, former monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno (Isernia), 'Crypt' of abbot Epiphanius, vault (photo: Francesca Dell'Acqua).

and blue, the blue mandorla produces the optical illusion of enlarging the already imposing figure and reflecting her glorious majesty. By attracting the gaze from the dado, painted as a *velum* with eagles also recalling majesty, upward to the archangels, then to Mary in the apse, and finally to Christ in the vault, the beholder is invited to contemplate the heavenly hierarchy. At

Figure 11.6 Mary assumpta, detail, 824–42, mural painting, former monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno (Isernia), 'Crypt' of abbot Epiphanius, vault (photo: Francesca Dell'Acqua).

the same time, the image of Mary, focal for its location in the apse, seems a visual synopsis of the entire programme of the funerary chapel. In fact, the *Assumpta* seems to represent the faithful's hope that their bodies will be reunited with their souls after the Final Judgement.

It should be noted that the celebration of the Assumption was officially permitted in the Carolingian Empire only in 826. This means that when the crypt was painted under the Frankish abbot Epyphanius (824–42), although in a monastery in southern Langobardia, the matter was still debated in the West.[28] In order to explain such depiction within the painted programme, a young Pietro Toesca, later regarded as the founder of medieval art history in Italy, had the fine intuition in 1904 to refer to the sermon for the celebration of the Assumption written by a former monk and abbot of San Vincenzo al Volturno. The author, Ambrosius Autpertus, was still quite obscure,

[28] *Capitula e Conciliis excerpta* 3.36, MGH Capit. 1, 312. For a discussion on the Carolingian 'controversy' over Mary's Assumption, see the above-mentioned chapter on the Assumption in F. Dell'Acqua, *Iconophilia*, forthcoming.

his works having only partly been published in the *Patrologia Latina* and often under the names of more eminent, homonymous authors. In 1968 Hans Belting noted that the importance given to Mary in the 'crypt' should not necessarily be connected to patronage, but rather to local theological themes, and so reinforced the idea that the programme painted between 824 and 842 owed much to the former abbot Autpertus.[29] Belting also underlined the uniqueness of the crowned Mary holding a book quoting the Magnificat, that is, as *Assumpta* ('taken up to heaven') in early medieval Italy.[30] In fact, extant images of Mary dating earlier or to the same period present Mary as *Theotokos* ('God bearer') or *Maria Regina* (crowned).

One needs to ask why Autpertus' writings appear to be so relevant to this iconography. In his homily on the Assumption he describes Mary being lifted above the angels, reigning with Christ, king of angels, as Queen of Heaven.[31] He often quotes the Magnificat as the most appropriate praise for her.[32] He celebrates Mary's humility, which made her the heavenly ladder (*scala caelestis*) from which God descended to earth – thus adopting in the West a new metaphor for describing her role in the history of salvation.[33] In the West, before Autpertus, the word *scala* is to be found in the works of a great number of Church Fathers and monastic authors. In Augustine and Zeno of Verona the ladder appears with reference to the Saviour;[34] in Ambrose, Jerome, Caesarius of Arles it appears with reference to the Cross;[35] in Jerome and Zeno with reference to the concordance of the two

[29] H. Belting, *Studien zur beneventanischen Malerei* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968), 218.

[30] Ibid., 216.

[31] Autpertus, *On the Assumption* 2, CCCM 27 B, 1028, ll. 15–18.

[32] Autpertus, *On the Assumption* 6, CCCM 27 B, 1030, ll. 9–10; 7, CCCM 27 B, 1031, 5–6; 8, CCCM 27 B, 1032, ll. 8–9; 10, CCCM 27 B, 1033–4, ll. 3–4, 9–11, 23.

[33] Autpertus, *On the Assumption* 10, CCCM 27 B, 1033–4, ll. 1–11: Hinc etiam haec Virgo gloriosa beatam se dici ab omnibus generationibus manifestat, eo quod eius humilitatem Deus respexit. Nam subdit: *Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes*. O uere beata humilitas, quae Deum hominibus peperit, uitam mortalibus edidit, caelos innouauit, mundum purificauit, paradisum aperuit, et hominum animas ab inferis liberauit! O uere, inquam, gloriosa Mariae humilitas, quae porta paradisi efficitur, scala caeli constituitur! Facta est certe humilitas Mariae scala caelestis, per quam descendit Deus ad terras. Quia respexit, inquit, humilitatem ancillae suae. *Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes*.

[34] Augustine, *The City of God* 16.38, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 48 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 544, ll.46–7; Zeno of Verona, *Treatises* 1.37, ed. B. Löfstedt, CCSL 22 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 101, l.5.

[35] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of his Brother Satyrus* 2.100, ed. O. Faller, CSEL 73 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1955), 304, l.6; Jerome, *Fifty-Nine Brief Commentaries on the Psalms* 91, ed. G. Morin, CCSL 78 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958), 139, ll. 187–94; Jerome, *Letters* 18A.14, ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1910), 91, l. 20.

Testaments;[36] in Augustine, Jerome, Cassiodorus, Isidore and Bede with the obvious reference to Jacob's ladder.[37] Specifically, Isidore saw Jacob's ladder as a metaphor for Christ who said 'Ego sum via' ('I am the way', Jn 14:6) and in the angels ascending and descending he saw the evangelists and the preachers, since the ladder goes from the flesh to the spirit.[38] When recalling the teaching of Benedict of Nursia, Bede wrote that the rungs in Jacob's ladder are made of humility, since humility is the way to spiritual perfection according to monastic mentality.[39] In fact Benedict had written in his monastic *Rule* that the ladder represents the terrestrial life which can lead to God by keeping a humble heart.[40] This metaphor appears also in two other monastic rules written in Campania in the early sixth century: the *Regula Magistri*, believed to be the main literary source for that of Benedict, and the almost contemporary *Rule* written by Eugippius for his community at Lucullanum.[41]

Surely Autpertus knew at least Benedict's *Rule*, if not all the aforementioned monastic rules, which agree in stating humility as a moral priority to be kept in mind and put in practice. For facilitating compliance with the moral requirements of the *Rules*, Autpertus was offering Mary's *exemplum*. But where did he get the inspiration for defining Mary as 'scala caelestis'? While the virtue of humility and the image of the ladder were combined and influential in the early Eastern and Western monastic milieux,[42] it is in the East that the figure of Mary came to be associated with the ladder, as it had been already for her Son. In the gradually crafted idea of Mother

36 Zeno of Verona, *Treatises* 1.37, ed. B. Löfstedt, CCSL 22 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 101, ll. 7–11; Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel* 1.1.15–18, ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 75 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1964), 20, ll. 487–91.

37 Only to name a few examples: Augustine, *Letter to Catholics of the Donatist Sect* 6.13, ed. M. Petschenig, CSEL 52 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1909), 244, l. 29, ibid., 6.14, 245, l.21; Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* 49.21–3, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 97 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958), 452, ll. 478–80; Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons* 87, ed. G. Morin, CCSL 103 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953), 357–61; Bede, *Homilies* on the *Gospels* 1.17, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 126–7, ll. 266–84.

38 Isidore of Seville, *Questions on Genesis* 24.3–4, PL 83, 258.

39 Bede, *On Ezra and Nehemiah* 3, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 350–1, ll. 466–73.

40 Benedict of Nursia, *Rule of Saint Benedict* 7.5–10, ed. A. de Vogüé, *La règle de Saint Benoît, I (Prologue–Ch. 7),* SC 181 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972), 472–4.

41 *Rule of the Master* 10.5–10, ed. A. de Vogüé*, La Règle du Maître, I (Prologue–Ch. 10),* SC 105 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 418–20; Eugippius, *Rule* 28.5–82, ed. F. Villegas and A. de Vogüé, CSEL 87 (Vienna: Hölder Pichler Tempsky, 1976), 51–9.

42 Cf. John Klimakos, *The Ladder of Paradise*, PG 88, 632–66; C. Luibheid and N. Russell (trans.), *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (London: SPCK, 1982).

and Son bound by an indissoluble union, features or metaphors applied to Christ were transmitted to Mary.

The *Akathistos*, the most widespread Marian hymn dated between the fifth and the sixth centuries, described the role of the Theotokos with an impressive list of biblical typologies, epithets and metaphors, among which was the 'celestial ladder by which God descended' (3.10–11). This metaphor is drawn from the Old Testament (Gen 28:12–17). In the same hymn, Mary is called 'joy of all generations' echoing the Magnificat (9.17).[43] The metaphor of the celestial ladder is not found in Greek Marian homilies before the early eighth century, when iconophile writers not only adopted it, but quoted the Magnificat as the most fitting praise for Mary in her *transitus*. In the prologue of the first homily he dedicated to the Dormition, Germanos of Constantinople invokes Mary by saying: 'guide the steps of my mind with your ready hand … for you rightly said that all generations of men and women would call you blessed'.[44] In the second homily on the Dormition, Germanos presents Christ addressing his Mother as 'a ladder to heaven strong enough to bear the weight of all humanity as it climbs'.[45] Andrew of Crete declares the Magnificat to be the most suitable praise for Mary,[46] and towards the end of his trilogy on the Dormition, he invites the faithful to look upon Mary as, among other things, the ladder of Jacob.[47] In his first homily on the Dormition, within a long list of metaphors drawn from the Old Testament, John of Damascus stated that the most fitting and rich metaphor for Mary's role in the history of salvation is Jacob's ladder: 'Is it not obvious to everyone that it too is an anticipation and a type of you? Just as [Jacob] saw the ladder joining heaven and earth by its [two] ends, so that angels could go up and down on it … so you, too, are an intermediary; you have joined distant extremes together, and have become the ladder for God's descent to us.'[48] And in his third homily, John wrote that Mary, the

43 C. A. Trypanis (ed.), *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica* (Vienna: In Kommission bei Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1968), 17–39; L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); L. M. Peltomaa, 'Epithets of the Theotokos in the Akathistos Hymn', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 109–16.

44 Germanos of Constantinople, *On the Most Venerable Dormition of the Holy Mother of God* 1.1, PG 98, 340B; Daley (trans.), *On the Dormition*, 153.

45 Germanos, *On the Dormition* 2.3, PG 98, 361D; Daley (trans.), *On the Dormition*, 171.

46 Andrew of Crete, *Oration on the Annunciation of the Supremely Holy Lady, our Theotokos*, PG 97, 897A–901A; trans. M. B. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008), 207–10.

47 Andrew of Crete, *On the Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Mother of God* 3.13, PG 97, 1105A; Daley, *On the Dormition*, 147–8.

48 John of Damascus, *On the Dormition* 1.8, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 5, PTS 29 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 493, ll. 41–51; Daley, *On the Dormition*, 193.

'spiritual, living ladder, by which the Most High has appeared on earth … has herself climbed the ladder of death, and gone up from earth to heaven'.[49] John observed that Mary rightly predicted she would be called blessed by all generations, not from the moment of her death but from the moment of the conception of Christ. He also added that death has not made her blessed, but she made death glorious, destroying its horror and showing death to be a joy.[50] The textual image of Mary as ladder to heaven, relying on the typological parallelism of Jacob's ladder, was also among the *topoi* of the pericope on Jacob's vision that was part of the Great Vespers preceding the main Marian feasts.[51]

It is hard to determine whether the metaphor of the celestial ladder came to be adopted by eighth-century authors through the influence of the *Akathistos*, or of other liturgical texts or practices, or because some of them belonged to the monastic milieu where the idea of the spiritual ladder was important. Although also the modalities of the transmission of Greek homilies or liturgical texts to the West are still unknown,[52] it remains the case that Autpertus adopted the same phrasing, metaphors and epithets to describe Mary, her Assumption into heaven and her role in the history of salvation. It is meaningful, in fact, that the early Western monastic interpretation of Jacob's ladder as a 'ladder of humility' that represents a difficult ascent to God, in the spiritual and theological landscape of Autpertus overlapped with the Byzantine metaphor of Mary as 'ladder to heaven', widely disseminated by the *Akathistos* and the early eighth-century Byzantine homiletic production. As for visual images, it seems that Mary was portrayed as heavenly ladder not before the eleventh century.[53] Therefore one must look to the eighth- and ninth-century Greek homilies as the missing link between the Eastern Mariology and Autpertus.

[49] John, *On the Dormition* 3.2, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 549, ll. 1–3; Daley, *On the Dormition*, 232.

[50] John, *On the Dormition* 1.12, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 497–8, ll. 1–19; Daley, *On the Dormition*, 197.

[51] K. Linardou, 'Depicting the Salvation: Typological Images of Mary in the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts', in Brubaker and Cunningham, *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, 133–49, esp. 136–7.

[52] The study on eighth-century Marian homilies on the Dormition by Cupiccia, 'Anastasio bibliotecario', is an exception.

[53] See Linardou, 'Depicting the Salvation', 137; E. Ene D-Vasilescu, 'The Last Wonderful Thing: The Icon of the Heavenly Ladder on Mount Sinai', in A. Eastmond and L. James (eds.), *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 139–48, also for earlier literature.

Autpertus' Homily on the Assumption

Autpertus is generally acknowledged as the earliest Western Mariologist. Only hinted at and still unexplored, the theological, liturgical and devotional sources of Autpertus' Mariology seem indeed to have Eastern origins.[54] It is true that neither in his homily on the Dormition, nor in any other works, does he openly say that he has drawn inspiration from Greek texts or cultural traditions. But it appears telling that – perhaps echoing the lack of sources already lamented by Andrew of Crete a propos of the death of Mary[55] – Autpertus writes that 'no Catholic history' tells about Mary's transmigration to heaven, that apocryphal writings on this matter should be rejected[56] and that it is not possible to find 'apud Latinos' any treatise that openly deals with it.[57] He omits to say that he had eventually reverted to Eastern sources. This is only proven by the many affinities his 'images' of Mary have with the Eastern tradition. Possibly he was being cautious, given the political tensions among Franks, Lombards and Byzantines in Italy which were reflected in his own monastery. As a consequence, Autpertus' use of Byzantine sources on the Dormition and the bodily Assumption of Mary can only be argued by the many textual images which he seems to have drawn from the Eastern traditions. Echoing once more Eastern authors such as Andrew of Crete and John of Damascus, Autpertus accepts the idea that God wished to keep Mary's physical departure mysterious and suggests that without doubt one should believe that she was taken up to heaven, above the angels, to reign with Christ.[58] Also the Lombard Paul the Deacon (d. 797), monk at Montecassino, composed two original homilies on the Assumption, which have been dated to after 787.[59] It remains the case that he too states that Christians must faithfully believe in Mary's Assumption and accept that the end of Mary's terrestrial life should remain mysterious. He also warns that nobody should doubt that Mary is the most powerful intercessor, above all saints. These similarities with Autpertus

[54] L. Gambero, 'Il contributo di Ambrogio Autperto (d. 781) alla tradizione mariologica della Chiesa', *Maria in scrittori del V-VIII secolo,* II. *Theotokos. Ricerche interdisciplinari di mariologia* 15 (2007), 257–78.

[55] Andrew, *On the Dormition* 2.8, PG 97, 1061A; Daley, *On the Dormition*, 126–7.

[56] Autpertus, *On the Assumption* 2, CCCM 27B, 1027–8, ll. 1–18.

[57] Autpertus, *On the Assumption* 3, CCCM 27B, 1028, ll. 1–2: Sed nec invenitur apud Latinos aliquis tractatorum de eius morte quippiam aperte dixisse.

[58] Autpertus, *On the Assumption* 2, CCCM 27B, 1028, ll. 15–18; 3, CCCM 27B, 1028, ll. 14–17.

[59] The first homily (PL 95, 1565D–69D) circulated under the name of the fourth–fifth-century bishop Maximus of Turin (CPPM I B 5910, 17). The second one (PL 95, 1569D–74) is incomplete, see H. Barré, 'Le sermon 208 du Pseudo-Augustin: La croyance à l'Assomption corporelle en Occident de 750 à 1150 environ', *Bulletin de la Société française d'études mariales*

notwithstanding, Paul does not seem to rely on the Greek tradition, at least not directly.

The focal position which Mary gained in Autpertus' mental and devotional spheres might have been stimulated not only by an acquaintance with the widespread Marian cult in Rome, but also with the cult attributed to her in his own monastery.[60] At San Vincenzo al Volturno there were three churches dedicated to Mary, one built by abbot Taso (720–1 and 729–39), one of the three founders of the monastic settlement, one by abbot Paul I (783/5–792/3) and the third by abbot Epiphanius, the above-mentioned Santa Maria in insula. Moreover, Marian devotion was deeply rooted in the monastery of Farfa, which is presented by the same Autpertus as the spiritual mother-abbey of San Vincenzo al Volturno.[61] In fact, in the early eighth century, the founder and abbot Thomas of Maurienne (d. 720) instructed three young noblemen from *Beneventum* to revert to their native region to find the spiritual desert they were looking for.[62] A native of Savoy, Thomas had established a *cenobium* at Farfa on his way back from the Holy Land, where, in the Holy Sepulchre, he had had a vision of Mary telling him to restore a ruined church dedicated to her. In a corner of rural Sabina, to the north-west of Rome, Thomas spotted a ruined church which was part of an abandoned monastic settlement originally erected by Syrian monks fleeing from the persecutions of the Miaphysite patriarch of Antioch. The pilgrimage to Holy Land and the vision he enjoyed in the Holy Sepulchre suggest Thomas' acquaintance with Eastern Marian devotion, cult practices and narratives. It is likely that apocryphal accounts of Mary's *transitus* were known if not preserved at Farfa, and because of tight connections between

7 (1949): 67–70, esp. 66–7; the complete text, transmitted in several manuscripts written at Montecassino and Benevento, was published by L. Tosti, *Storia della badia di Montecassino* (Rome: L. Pasqualucci Editore, 1888), vol. 1, 300–7, who mentions Montecassino, Archivio dell'Abbazia, ms. 101, then on the same page ms. 181. These two homilies have finally been edited by L. Buono, 'Le omelie per l'Assunzione di Paolo Diacono. Introduzione ed edizione', *Studi Medievali* s. 3, 58.2 (2017): 697–756.

[60] F. Marazzi, 'Fama praeclari martyris Vincentii: Riflessioni su origini e problemi del culto di san Vincenzo di Saragozza a San Vincenzo al Volturno', *Sanctorum* 4 (2007): 163–202, esp. 190–1; F. Marazzi, 'Varcando lo spartiacque: San Vincenzo al Volturno dalla fondazione alla conquista franca del Regnum Langobardorum', in V. Pace (ed.), *L'VIII secolo: Un secolo inquieto. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Cividale del Friuli, 4–7 Dicembre 2008)* (Friuli: Comune di Cividale del Friuli, 2010), 163–84, esp. 170 and 177.

[61] M. Costambeys, *Power and Patronage in the Early Medieval Italy: Local Society, Italian Politics, and the Abbey of Farfa, c.700–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 85, on the lack of studies on the cult of Mary at Farfa and in early medieval Italy.

[62] Ambrosius Autpertus, *Vita ss. Paldonis, Tasonis et Tatonis* 5–8, CCCM 27B, 897–9; cf. T. Granier, 'La fonction normative des textes hagiographiques dans la Chronique de Saint-Vincent du Vulturne (vers 1120)', in M.-C. Isaïa and T. Granier (eds.), *Normes et hagiographie dans l'Occident latin (Ve–XVIe siècles): Actes du colloque international de Lyon, 4–6 octobre 2010* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 151–65.

San Vincenzo and Farfa, Autpertus might have come across those accounts there. He might also have become acquainted with the Eastern Mariological tradition at the papal court, or through Greek monastic communities in Rome or elsewhere in central-southern Italy. In any case, it comes as no surprise that, intricate as they were, apocryphal narratives about Mary's Dormition might have confounded him to the point he believed them untrustworthy.

As stated above, Autpertus' sermon on the Assumption is the earliest original homily composed in Latin for the feast of the Assumption. In fact, earlier ones are centos of patristic quotes. His homily was edited in *Patrologia Latina*, volume 40, under the name of Augustine, and was not restored to Autpertus until it appeared in the *Corpus Christianorum* edition of his works a few decades ago.[63] Simon Claude Mimouni has noted that the earliest 'truly western' homily on the Assumption was written by John bishop of Arezzo (d. 900) in the late ninth century.[64] Actually, John's work summarises the homilies on the same topic authored by Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus, Germanos of Constantinople and Kosmas Vestitor, which had been collated in one manuscript, possibly at the papal court in Rome in the last decades of the ninth century.[65] John was a member of the court of Pope John VIII and apparently commissioned this collection of translated homilies. But going back to Mimouni's remark, one wonders if the fact that an authoritative scholar did not recognise the homily by Autpertus as a 'truly western' one in content can be taken as an implicit admission that it relies on Eastern sources. In his commentary to the Apocalypse, written between 757 and 767 when he was still a monk, Autpertus admits that in his life he had devoted more time than was appropriate to preaching the divine things and to composing sermons.[66] His sudden death in 784 must have been regarded as a fact of political relevance, as it was reported by Pope Hadrian I to Charlemagne.[67] Unfortunately, of his admittedly large preaching activity only four sermons have been identified. The fact that none of them were included in the official Carolingian homiliary compiled in ca. 787 by Paul the Deacon at the request of Charlemagne might hint at their controversial topics, such as Mary's bodily Assumption. Aware of the

63 R. Weber (ed.), *Ambrosii Autperti Opera*, CCCM 27, 27A, 27B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975–9).

64 Mimouni, *Les traditions anciennes*, 166: 'De fait, et cela mérite d'être souligné, il faut savoir que la première homélie latine sur le sort final de Marie, réellement occidentale, est celle de Jean d'Arrezo [sic] (CANT 118 = BHL 5355m): elle date de la seconde moitié du IXe siècle.'

65 Cupiccia, 'Anastasio bibliotecario', 43–4.

66 Ambrosius Autpertus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 9 (Prologue), CCCM 27A, 718, ll. 50–69.

67 *Ep.* 67, MGH *Epist.*, vol. 1, 594–7, esp. 595.

diversity of liturgical practices in his kingdom, Charlemagne decided to promote a repertory of ecclesiastical texts which would pursue the ideal of *unanimitas* that lay beneath all his institutional reforms.[68] In his collection Paul the Deacon followed the blueprint of Alanus, abbot of Farfa, who had collated a homiliary a few decades earlier, essentially drawing excerpts from the Fathers.[69] Paul's cautious choices complied on the one hand with the moderate views of Benedictine monasticism embodied by Montecassino, which was the main spiritual focus of his life, and on the other with the usual papal policy on theological controversies, which implied accepting the results of all the ecumenical councils while not criticising Eastern policies.[70] But those decades saw growing, open criticism by the popes against Byzantium's religious policies: the iconophile council convened at the Lateran in 769 is an example. In such an unpredictable situation, Paul excluded recent authors, among which also Autpertus, whom he nevertheless defines 'eruditissimus'.[71] Although the majority of later medieval homiliaries stemmed from the work of Alanus and Paul,[72] already by the late eighth or early ninth century Autpertus' homilies, as well as his other writings, reached the main Carolingian monasteries north of the Alps, such as the royal abbey of Saint-Denis, Corbie, Reichenau and St Gall, where they were transcribed and further distributed.[73]

[68] R. Grégoire, *Homéliaires liturgiques médiévaux: Analyse de manuscripts*, Biblioteca degli 'Studi Medievali' 12 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1980), 423–86. Y. Hen, 'Paul the Deacon and the Frankish Liturgy', in P. Chiesa (ed.), *Paolo Diacono. Uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio. Convegno internazionale di studi (Cividale del Friuli-Udine, 6–9 Maggio 1999)* (Udine: Forum, 2000), 205–21, esp. 216–21; Y. Hen, 'The Romanization of the Frankish Liturgy: Ideal, Reality and the Rhetoric of the Reform', in C. Bolgia, R. McKitterick and J. Osborne (eds.), *Rome across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas c. 500–1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 111–23, esp. 115–17; M. Costambeys, 'The Monastic Environment of Paul the Deacon', in P. Chiesa (ed.), *Paolo Diacono*, 127–38; M. W. Herren, 'Theological Aspects of the Writings of Paul the Deacon', in P. Chiesa (ed.), *Paolo Diacono*, 223–35, esp. 228, argues that the homiliary could have been compiled also in Francia.

[69] G. Morin, 'Les sources non identifiées de l'Homéliaire de Paul Diacre', *RBén* 15 (1898): 400–3; F. Wiegand, 'Ein Vorläufer des Paulushomiliars', *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 75 (1902): 188–205; E. Hosp, 'Il sermonario di Alano di Farfa', *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 50 (1936): 375–83; E. Hosp, 'Il sermonario di Alano di Farfa (Continuazione)', *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 51 (1937): 211–41; Grégoire, *Homéliaires liturgiques*, 128–221.

[70] Herren, 'Theological Aspects', 229–35.

[71] Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* 6.40, MGH *SRL*, 179.

[72] J. Leclercq, 'Tables pour l'inventaire des homiliaires manuscrits', *Scriptorium* 2.2 (1948): 195–214, esp. 196.

[73] Weber, *Ambrosii Autperti Opera*, CCCM 27B, 882–90 on the homilies; Weber, 'Edition princeps et tradition manuscrite du commentaire d'Ambroise Autpert sur l'Apocalypse', *RBén* 70 (1960): 526–39; G. Braga, 'Testimonianze di vita monastica italiana fra nord e sud nell'VIII

Conclusions

The metaphor of the Virgin Mary as ladder to heaven appeared first in the West in Autpertus' homily on the Assumption. Whereas it was not *literally* visualised in the figural arts of the East before the eleventh century, this never occurred in the West. Nevertheless, Mary's role as the ladder connecting heaven and earth is suggested by a new iconography that is attested for the first time in the 'crypt' of Epiphanius. Between the majestic Christ at the apex of the vault and a row of imposing archangels in the apsidal conch, Mary appears enthroned, crowned, haloed, surrounded by a strikingly colourful mandorla and holding a book which invites the beholder to look up at her; she is the one who will be praised by all generations (Lk 1:48). For the first time she is represented as *Assumpta*, that is 'taken up to heaven', above the angels, as 'living ladder' between the faithful on earth and the Saviour in heaven. While praying in the small funerary chapel for the salvation of the deceased, the faithful would have been invited by the *Assumpta* to lift their gaze above the angels and stare at her – an uplifting image of glorified humility befitting lay people as well as monks. A few centuries later, the Siena stained-glass roundel, with its central scenes depicting Mary's gradual ascent to heaven to become Queen to the side of her Son-Bridegroom, from the Dormition, to the Assumption and finally the Coronation, would make manifest, in an unsurpassed manner, her role as ladder to heaven.

secolo: Ambrogio, Autperto e Paolo Diacono fra San Vincenzo al Volturno e Montecassino', in G. Spinelli (ed.), *Il monachesimo italiano dall'età longobarda all'età ottoniana (secc. VIII–IX)* (Cesena: Badia di Santa Maria del Monte, 2006), 509–34, esp. 523.

12 Christological and Ecclesiological Narratives in Early Eighth-Century Greek Homilies on the Theotokos

FR EVGENIOS IVERITES

The defeat of the great Arab Islamic siege of Constantinople in the late 660s and the formal closure of the debate over the nature of willing in the person of Christ, at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680–1, were landmark events in the geopolitical and religious history of the Byzantine Empire.[1] Important as such events were in themselves, however, they cannot be understood apart from their reception and interpretation in the thought and rhetoric of Byzantium.[2] An important source for this process of cultural assimilation is the preaching of three leading churchmen of the time, Andrew of Crete, Germanos of Constantinople and John of Damascus. Their homilies on feasts of the Virgin Mary, in particular, offer a view into the process whereby the various theological formulations about Christ in his divine and human aspects were expounded and expanded through the narrative lens of the life and death of the Virgin, known commonly in the Greek Christian world by her theological title 'Theotokos' – the one who gave birth to God. As the tender mother of the divine Son, she offered an emotionally appealing and imaginatively rich field for exploring the implications for the lives of ordinary humans of the imposing dogmatic formulas about Christ. In providing a body to God, the Theotokos also offered herself as a potent

[1] On the history of this period, see most recently J. Haldon, *The Empire that would Not Die: The Paradox of East Roman Survival, c. 640–740 CE* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016) and the same author's *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd rev. ed., 1997). For more on ecclesiastical aspects, see M. Jankowiak, 'Essai d'histoire politique du monothélisme à partir de la correspondance entre les empereurs byzantins, les patriarches de Constantinople et les papes de Rome' (PhD thesis, École pratique des Hautes Études and Uniwersytet Warszawski, 2009) and M. Jankowiak, 'The First Arab Siege of Constantinople', *TM* 17 (2013), 237–320 and P. Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

[2] In this chapter I thus attempt to put into practice what Andrew Louth suggested regarding a new approach to sources for the 'Dark Ages' of Byzantium, that 'to make full use of these "untraditional" sources would, however, involve writing a different kind of history, beginning not from the institutional and political, but rather working outwards from the deeply-considered worldview to be found in such writings'. See A. Louth, 'Byzantium Transforming', in J. Shepard (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 227.

symbol focusing the self-identification, the fears and the hopes of the whole body of right-believing Christians, the Church. Given the importance of ecclesiology for the social and political life of the Byzantine Empire, these discourses also addressed threats to the cohesion of the body politic. Their contributions highlighted the importance of the Theotokos for forming and strengthening Christian and Roman identity.

Germanos was a scion of the high nobility of Constantinople and spent his whole life (ca. 650–730) within the political boundaries of the Byzantine Empire.[3] Andrew (ca. 660–740) spent his mature clerical career within the empire, but he had been born in Damascus, by then the capital of the Umayyad rulers of the Arab Islamic caliphate, and educated in Jerusalem, also in Arab hands.[4] John (ca. 670–750) was also from Damascus, from a leading family of that city, and served in the caliphal government before leaving to become a monk and priest in Jerusalem, a city whose role in the past and present of theology and history he emphasised in his writings. Nevertheless, through his involvement in contemporary theological controversies he engaged, perforce, with the imperial ideology that, in both the Byzantine and 'post-Byzantine' spheres, impinged on theological debate among adherents of the Chalcedonian understanding of Christ.[5] In Germanos, Andrew and John, then, within a context of broadly shared

[3] On the life of Germanos, the most thorough overview, although dated, remains L. Lamza, *Patriarch Germanos I. von Konstantinopel (715–730). Versuch einer endgültigen chronologischen Fixierung des Lebens und Wirkens des Patriarchen* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1975); his persuasive argument (pp. 53–61) that Germanos' birth should be dated to the 650s and not as early as 630 has been overlooked by most later authors. See also A. Kazhdan with L. F. Sherry and C. Angelidi, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens: National Hellenic Foundation Institute for Byzantine Research, 1999), 55–74 and D. Stein, 'Germanos I. (715–730)', in R.-J. Lilie (ed.), *Die Patriarchen der ikonoklastichen Zeit. Germanos I.–Methodios I. (715–847)* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1999), 5–21.

[4] Our knowledge of the life of Andrew is based almost entirely on the eighth- or ninth-century *Life* by Niketas, which contains significant silences; ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Βίος τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀνδρέου τοῦ Ἱεροσολυμίτου, ἀρχιεπισκόπου γενομένου Κρήτης, συγγραφεὶς παρὰ Νικήτα τοῦ πανευφήμου πατρικίου καὶ κυέστορος' in *Ἀνάλεκτα ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς σταχυολογίας ἢ συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων*, vol. 5. (St Petersburg: V. Kirschbaum, 1898; repr. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963), 169–79; modern overviews include M.-F. Auzépy, 'La carrière d'André de Crète', *BZ* 88 (1995): 1–12 and Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, 37–54.

[5] For John's life and work, see Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, 75–94; A. Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and for the tangled problem of his biography, V. Kontouma, 'John of Damascus (c. 655–c. 745)', article I, in the same author's *John of Damascus: New Studies on his Life and Works* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015). John expresses the sense of being a subject of the emperor in various passages, e.g. *Apologetical Discourses against Those Who Calumniate the Holy Icons* 2.12.38–40, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskus*, vol. 3, PTS 29 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 104.

theological and political concerns, we can trace variations in two key processes: exegesis of the person and experiences of the Virgin as a key to understanding the person and experiences of Christ, and exposition of her role as a synecdoche for the Church within a particular geopolitical context.

In what follows, I will draw as widely as possible on the Marian preaching of these authors.[6] For Andrew, this consists of *Homilies* 1–4 on the Nativity of the Theotokos, *Homily* 5 on the Annunciation and 12–14 on the Dormition.[7] Germanos wrote two homilies on the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, one on the Annunciation, two on the Dormition and one on the Girdle of the Theotokos.[8] In addition, there is a homily on the *Akathist,* whose attribution to Germanos is probably reliable, and a homily on the Dormition whose attribution is probably false, but which must date from around the same time.[9] John composed a trilogy of homilies on the Dormition; these are the only Marian sermons that Kotter attributes

[6] The study of Andrew and Germanos is hampered by the lack of critical textual work on their writings, yet there is enough solid material to describe their thought. The situation for John of Damascus is far better thanks to the editorial work of Bonifatius Kotter, but some problems remain, especially where his decisions on the authenticity of works are debatable. For some brief comments on the problems, see M. B. Cunningham, (trans.), *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 25, n. 49, and 38–43; cf. also her 'Andrew of Crete: A High-Style Preacher of the Eighth Century', in M. B. Cunningham and P. Allen (eds.), *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 267–93, at 268–9.

[7] Andrew of Crete, *Homilies* 1–4, *On the Nativity of the Theotokos* (*CPG* 8170–3; text in PG 97, 805–81); Homily 5, *On the Annunciation* (*CPG* 8174; PG 97, 881–913); Homilies 12–14 (*CPG* 8181–3; PG 97, 1045–109); a Homily on the *Akathist* (*CPG* 8197), attributed to Andrew in one of its three known manuscripts, is rather to be assigned to the Emperor of Nicaea Theodore II Laskaris; see A. Giannouli, 'Eine Rede auf das Akathistos-Fest und Theodor II. Dukas Laskaris (BHGa 1140, *CPG* 8197)', *JÖB* 51 (2001): 259–83.

[8] *CPG* 8007–13: note that 8010 and 8011 are actually a single sermon, divided by some Byzantine scribes, probably to create a trilogy of homilies, such as those often delivered over the course of a liturgical vigil; see B. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998), 19; cf. C. Chevalier, 'Les Trilogies homilétiques dans l'élaboration des fêtes Mariales. 650–850', *Gregorianum* 18.2/3 (1937): 361–78. The seven texts listed above are given as Homilies 3–9 in PG 98, 292–384 (the latter lists as 1–2 works now attributed to Germanos II, a later patriarch of Constantinople, *CPG* 8030–1). The text of the homily *On the Annunciation* (*CPG* 8009) in the PG has major lacunas. A complete text was published from a nineteenth-century manuscript by D. Fecioru, 'Un nou gen de predica in omiletica ortodoxa', *BOR* 64 (1946), 65–91, 180–92, 386–96 (I thank Mary Cunningham for providing me with a copy of the article). But even this represents only one strand of the manuscript tradition, containing an interpolation in the conclusion; see Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 49–50.

[9] *CPG* 8014: V. Grumel, 'Homélie de saint Germain sur la délivrance de Constantinople', *REB* 16 (1958): 183–205 (esp. 187 on authorship); *CPG* 8025: A. Wenger, 'Un nouveau témoin de l'Assomption: une homélie attribuée à saint Germain de Constantinople', *REB* 16 (1958): 43–58 (46–7 on authorship). P. Speck, 'Klassizismus im achten Jahrhundert? Die Homilie des Patriarchen Germanos über die Rettung Konstantinopels', *REB* 44 (1986): 209–27, argued against the authenticity of Grumel's homily, but I do not find his arguments to be conclusive.

to him. Kotter denies to him a homily on the Nativity of the Theotokos, but this decision has not been universally accepted.[10] I will focus more on the Dormition sermons, since they are securely attributed, but also consider the Nativity homily, since it is rich in Christological content. Lastly, a homily on the Dormition is attributed to Modestos of Jerusalem (d. late 630 or early 631), but its use of technical language regarding the two wills of Christ means that it must be dated later.[11] As with the dubious homily on the Dormition attributed to Germanos, due to the roughly contemporary dating and the theological content of this work, I will include it in my presentation

Christology

Devotion to Mary was always implicitly bound up with faith in Christ, and it was not long before theologians such as Irenaeus of Lyons drew on the theological implications of Mary's giving birth to the Son of God. The Christological element in Mariology became decisive around the time of the Council of Ephesus (AD 431), when the confession of the term 'Theotokos' became a litmus test of official orthodoxy as recognised by the Roman emperors, because it emphasised that it was God the Word himself who was born from Mary in human form. Thereafter each new refinement in orthodox dogma about Christ – at subsequent councils, the most important and most controversial of which was the Fourth Ecumenical Council, held in the city of Chalcedon in 451, and in the many writings by individual authors that attacked or defended the decisions of the councils – was also registered in discourse about Mary.[12]

[10] John of Damascus, *Homilies on the Dormition* (*CPG* 8061–63), ed. Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 461–555. The homily on the Nativity (*CPG* 8060) is edited by Kotter in the same volume (pp. 147–82), despite his opinion that it is spurious. For the homily as genuine, see Louth, *St John Damascene*, 226, and Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 44–5. A homily on the Annunciation (*CPG* 8080) attributed to John is generally considered spurious and is not discussed here.

[11] *Homily on the Dormition* (*CPG* 7876; PG 86b, 3277–3312). For the dating of the homily, see Daley, *Dormition of Mary*, 14–15. Daley's statement that 'a clear reference … to the doctrine of Jesus' two naturally distinct wills, canonised at the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681), places its composition after that Council' seems to me too absolute, since the doctrine was formulated as early as the 640s by Maximos the Confessor. For the date of Modestos' death, see Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 186.

[12] For a brief overview of scholarly debates over the relation of nascent Marian piety to dogmatic decisions, see the contribution by Maria Lidova in the present volume. For the dogmatic element, see esp. S. Shoemaker, 'Mary and the Discourse of Orthodoxy: Early Christian Identity and the Early Dormition Legends' (PhD thesis, Duke University, 1997), 239–89,

At the time of Andrew, Germanos and John, the most recent and relevant conciliar decision, decreed by the Sixth Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 680–1, was the doctrine of the two energies and two wills of God the Word incarnate (ditheletism or dyotheletism), corresponding to his two natures, divine and human. The unknown author of the homily attributed to Modestos may have written before the council, but he is in agreement with its terminology. In addition to participating in this late phase of the formative Christological controversies, the three known authors attack positions advanced by a nascent movement of iconoclasm, which would become the next major point of dispute in Byzantine theology. Yet Andrew does not address this in his Marian homilies, and in Germanos and John these attacks are indirect and their specific targets unclear. All three also emphasise doctrines that were shared, at least formally, with their anti-Chalcedonian and monothelete opponents, such as the anti-Arian understanding of the Trinity as one essence and three persons, and the affirmation that in becoming incarnate Christ assumed a human soul endowed with a rational mind.[13] Here I confine my discussion to the Chalcedonian and dyothelete elements of their homilies.

These could be expressed in two ways: directly, as explicit affirmations in technical language of Mary's role as human mother of the divine Word, and indirectly, through symbols expressing this relation or meditation on its consequences for the human life of the Theotokos. The indirect approach is more common in these works, doubtless because the use of too many theological formulas was thought unsuitable for homilies.[14] To present the biblical and parabiblical materials and evoke an intellectual

noting that there was a simultaneous 'henotic' trend (named after the *Henotikon* of emperor Zeno), which sought to minimise differences by appealing to the Marian piety broadly shared by supporters and opponents of Chalcedon alike and focusing on certain powerful symbols and narratives of Mary as the birthgiver of God while avoiding technical polemics; cf. the same author's *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 256–79, and, more recently, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 166–229. In addition, for the formative role of Proclus of Constantinople in shaping Chalcedonian Mariology in the fifth century, see N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in the Fifth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), esp. 359–77; and for sixth- and seventh-century authors on both sides, see P. Allen, 'Portrayals of Mary in Greek Homiletic Literature (6th–7th centuries)', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 69–88.

[13] See e.g. Andrew, *Homily 1 on the Nativity*, PG 97, 817A; Germanos, *Homily on the Entrance* 1, PG 98, 296C.

[14] Though such qualms were not shared by their seventh-century forerunner Sophronios of Jerusalem, who opens his homily *On the Annunciation* with a series of dense Trinitarian and Christological dogmatic statements (PG 87c, 3217–88, esp. 3217–25).

and affective response in the audience, our authors preferred to engage in exegesis of relevant passages, or in imaginative meditation on them in the form of monologues or dialogues by the characters of the sacred narratives, or poetic strings of symbols and metaphors for the Theotokos.[15] In some cases the indirect approach might also have served surreptitiously to maintain a dyothelete consciousness in a climate of official monotheletism, either before the Sixth Ecumenical Council or during the brief monothelete resurgence under Emperor Philippikos Bardanes in AD 712–13. Yet the distinction should not be pressed too far; often we find technical terms incorporated into more symbolic meditations.

The indirect mode is more narrative in character, especially in the form of exegeses, monologues and dialogues, which can be considered a Christian parallel to the Jewish exegetical form of *aggadah*. But, as Andrew Louth has argued in a recent essay, the direct mode was also employed by Byzantine authors to work out the implications of the scriptural message in a kind of dogmatic *aggadah*.[16] He focuses especially on John of Damascus, and indeed John shows a remarkable ability to turn dry technical language into 'a kind of abstract and exhilarating poetry'.[17]

Indeed, it is John, as might be expected given his efforts to synthesise orthodox dogma, who offers the most explicit summaries of Christological doctrine.[18] Early in the first of the homilies on the Dormition, he gives a detailed dogmatic confession, summarising in formal language all the topics covered by dyothelete Chalcedonian orthodoxy.[19] Yet he is also able to weave the technical language into an allegory of the Virgin drawn from Scripture:

> The tent (*skēnē*) of Abraham, too, most clearly manifests you beforehand. For to the divine Word, who encamped (*skēnōsanti*) in your womb, human nature brought a loaf of bread baked in the ashes, its own first fruits from your virginal blood, baked somehow and made into bread by the divine fire and given individual substance in his divine hypostasis and coming into the true existence of a body animated by a soul both rational and intellectual.[20]

15 For more detailed discussion of several such imagined dialogues, see the contributions by Georgia Frank and Thomas Arentzen in the present volume.

16 A. Louth, 'John of Damascus on the Mother of God as a Link between Humanity and God', in Brubaker and Cunningham, *Cult of the Mother of God*, 153–61, especially 156–60, where he discusses what I call the 'indirect' as well as the 'direct' approach.

17 Louth, *St John Damascene*, 223; cf. Louth, 'John of Damascus', 156–60.

18 For an overview of John as a synthetic theologian, see Louth, *St John Damascene*, chs. 2 and 3, and V. Kontouma, 'At the Origins of Byzantine Systematic Dogmatics: The *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* of St John of Damascus', article VI in Kontouma, *John of Damascus*.

19 John of Damascus, *Homily on the Dormition* 1.3.24–43, ed. Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 486–7.

20 John, *Dormition* 1.8.35–40, Kotter, *Die Schriften,* vol. 5, 493 (all translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated).

John here connects an Old Testament type (Gen 18:6) with its New Testament fulfilment through the use of 'tent' language. In the Johannine passage alluded to (Jn 1:14), God the Word's encamping (or, in a more familiar translation, 'dwelling') is said to take place among *us*. Previous generations of Chalcedonian theologians had already done the work of exegeting this rather vague 'us' as human nature, interpreted with the aid of philosophical concepts. The culmination of these efforts was the doctrine of the *enhypostaton* (namely, that human nature in Christ did not have some independent existence as a person, but came into being precisely as the humanity of God the Word incarnate). It is characteristic of the 'high' Mariology of John and his contemporaries that the role of the Virgin in facilitating this coming-into-being of Christ's human nature is emphasised and celebrated. John's choice of type may have been influenced by the role of a woman and of miraculous childbirth (Sarah and Isaac) in the passage in question, but the detail of ash-baked bread (ἐγκρυφίας (LXX); cf. King James version, 'cakes upon the hearth' (Gen 18:6)) is what captures his attention, suggesting an image to express the rather abstruse concept of *enhypostaton*.

The homily on the Nativity is also full of Christological language, both symbolic and technical. One example is most relevant here because it touches on the same scriptural type as discussed in the previous paragraph:

> Let the famous tent, which Moses devised in the desert from precious and varied materials, bow down – and before this, that of father Abraham – to the animate and rational tent of God. For she was not the receptacle of God's activity only, but of the substantial presence of the very hypostasis of the Son of God.[21]

Though John here reflects on the hypostasis of Christ, he puts the typology to different use, emphasising Mary's discontinuity with Abraham's tent rather than the correspondence between them. The reason for this may be the strong anti-Nestorian tone of this homily:[22] with the contrast between the activity of God and his substantial presence, he implicitly refutes the idea, ascribed to Nestorius (the patriarch of Constantinople condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 for refusing to call Mary 'Theotokos'), that the presence of God in Jesus was different from his presence in the Old Testament saints only in degree, not in kind. By comparing these two passages we can observe that, for John, the technical language of dogma remains firm and unalterable, while scriptural and symbolical language can be more flexibly employed according to the rhetorical or polemical needs of the occasion.

[21] John, *Homily on the Nativity*, 6.36–40, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 176.

[22] Cf. John, *Nativity* 3.9–10, 4.15–17, 22–6, Kotter, *Die Schriften,* vol. 5, 171, 173.

Andrew of Crete generally eschews technical language, but sometimes it shows through. In the homily on the Annunciation, he ventures close to explicit Christological formulas, while never being as direct as his Damascene compatriot. One such instance, for example, is found in his rhetorical imagining of the heavenly Father's instructions to Gabriel as he sends him to the Annunciation:

> Depart therefore for Nazareth, a city of Galilee, and on arriving there, be diligent to address to the Virgin this first, the good tidings of joy, which Eve previously lost … For what was and will be a more gracious joy for the human race, than for it to become a partaker of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet 1:4) and, by means of its joining with him, to become one with him according to the principle of union, in other words of hypostasis?[23]

And a few lines later he adds:

> For what is more paradoxical than for God to be seen in human form, while not departing (ἐκστάντα) from his own divinity? And to see the whole of human nature joined to its fashioner, in order that the whole man be deified, who first fell under sin?[24]

The term 'hypostasis' is technical, especially when joined with 'principle': *logon … hypostaseos*.[25] But the doctrine of one hypostasis was also shared by anti-Chalcedonians. It is the second quotation that makes the specifically Chalcedonian approach of Andrew clear. Although he does not speak specifically of two natures, the emphasis on Christ's taking on the *whole* of human nature and deifying it assumes the dyophysite position, since one of the main arguments developed against Chalcedon by its opponents was that it was logically impossible for Christ to assume human nature as such.[26] The elision of the whole of human nature with the first man does not undermine this, but rather provides a rhetorically pleasing

23 Andrew of Crete, *Homily on the Annunciation*, PG 97, 892A.

24 Andrew, *Annunciation*, PG 97, 892B.

25 More fully: κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἑνώσεως εἴτ' οὖν ὑποστάσεως λόγον. The term is used with reference to natures rather than hypostasis in Andrew, *Homily on the Dormition* 1, PG 97, 1085B. Andrew may have drawn this understanding of 'principle' from Maximos the Confessor. See e.g. the latter's *Responses to Thalassios* 62, l. 85, ed. C. Laga and C. Steel, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, vol. 2, CSCG 22 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 119, and cf. *Ambigua ad Joannem* 42, PG 91, 1341D and *Opuscula theologica et polemica* 3, PG 91, 48B–D.

26 Andrew has a similar emphasis later in the same homily: 'He, taking on our essence, renewed it to conform to himself, restoring to the nature the image (cf. Gen 1:26) and the first dignity, which it had lost due to the carelessness of the first parents', PG 97, 912C–913A. For a justification of the Chalcedonian position, compare John, *Homily on the Hypapante* 3, Kotter, *Die Schriften,* vol. 5, 382–3 (although Kotter doubts the attribution to John) (*CPG* 8066).

inclusio to the Father's instruction to Gabriel, concluding with the primordial sin of Adam as it began with the lost joy of Eve.

More explicitly Chalcedonian is a declaration in the homily on the Annunciation, in a passage where Andrew explains how Mary is blessed among women, along with the fruit of her womb (Lk 1:42):

> For God blessed you as his own tabernacle when you bore, in an incomprehensible manner, the man superabundantly full of the fatherly glory, Christ Jesus, who himself is also God, in the perfection of the natures from which and in which he consists.[27]

Returning to the first *Homily on the Dormition,* we find Andrew going beyond two natures in order to rebut *monoenergist*, and implicitly also *monothelete*, ideas. In hymning the Virgin's burial, he recounts how, through her, both angels and human beings

> have obtained as well a common altar of propitiation, namely, this dominical and salvific body, made a temple from her without hands, belonging to him who partakes in common with us of every innate and intellectual movement, excepting sin alone.[28]

By 'innate movement' (*emphytou … kinēseōs*) Andrew means the natural human activities which constitute Christ's natural human *energeia*, and by adding 'intellectual' (*noeras*) he implies also the natural will which was affirmed by the Sixth Ecumenical Council. That *implying* it meant that Andrew was prevented by monothelete imperial authority from explicitly *asserting* it can only be a conjecture.

Let us finally return to Andrew's homily on the Annunciation for an example of a more poetic expression that nevertheless retains echoes of technical language, using a bread-related metaphor drawn from scripture (as in the quotation from John's Dormition homilies). Andrew addresses the Virgin thus:

> Rejoice, holy leaven perfected by God, from which the mass of the entire human race was leavened anew (cf. Mt 13:33), and being made bread from one body, that of Christ, came together into one paradoxical compound![29]

27 Andrew, *Annunciation*, PG 97, 897A.

28 Andrew, *Dormition* 1, PG 97, 1088A.

29 Andrew, *Annunciation*, PG 97, 896A. Earlier in the same sermon he discusses the believer's reception of the Eucharist with respect to the Virgin's role as altar of the bread of life (PG 97, 880AB). For a broader discussion of the Eucharist and Mary, see Maria Evangelatou's contribution in the present volume.

Whereas John used the image of bread to express the formation of Christ's human nature from the Virgin – the movement of humanity into God, as it were – Andrew seems to be using it here to describe the spread of the blessings of that divinised human nature outward to all humanity, with the result that the human race is itself formed anew into a divine-human reality (*sygkrima*) which mirrors the composite hypostasis of the incarnate Word – an idea that will be discussed more in my section on ecclesiology. This confirms the observation, already made with regard to John's second use of the type of Abraham's tent in his Nativity homily, that scriptural language and imagery is employed flexibly by our authors to articulate the truths anchored in dogmatic terminology.

Germanos meanwhile may be alluding in his first homily on the Dormition to the seventh-century disputes about energy and will in his discussion of the double birth of Christ. Interpreting together Psalm 109:3, 'From the womb, before the morning star, I begot you', and Psalm 2:7, 'My son you are, I have begotten you today', he argues that, although of course the Father begot the Son divinely before all ages, yet he could be said to have begotten him, in some sense, even at his human birth from the Virgin, which was effected by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, because the energy of the Godhead is common in both Father and Spirit.[30] This argument is not explicitly directed against monoenergism, but it draws creatively on the Trinitarian metaphysics of the Cappadocians that underpinned the orthodox dyothelete refutation of that heresy. Whether it was intended as a surreptitious rebuttal of monotheletism at a time when the latter doctrine was official imperial orthodoxy is, as suggested above, impossible to prove.

Let us conclude this section on the more or less explicit Christological language of our homilies with the sermon on the Dormition that is spuriously attributed to Modestos. The unknown composer of this work shares many of the same pre-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian concerns as our three main authors. For example, his expression of the idea that Christ communes with mortal human nature, in order to make it worthy of communion with his divine nature, parallels the passage from the imagined instruction of God the Father to Gabriel in Andrew's homily on the

[30] Germanos of Constantinople, *Homily I on the Dormition* 1, PG 98, 341C: 'It is clear that "today" does not show that the divinity of the Unique is recent, but rather confirms his coming to men in the body. And "I have begotten you" manifests the Holy Spirit's divine (θεαρχικόν) and synergetic commonality of essence in the Father. For, since the Spirit is not of another kind (ἀλλότριον) than the Father, the Father claims as his own the All-Holy Spirit's activity (ἐνέργεια), therefore the Father together with the Spirit causes the novel bodily coming forth of his Son from you: "I", he says to the Son, "have begotten you today".'

Annunciation quoted above.[31] His use of dogmatic formulas, however, has most in common with John.

> Rejoice, most sacred Ever-Virgin Mother, who gave birth to the one who was incarnate from you of the Holy Spirit, Christ the Son of God, who is perfect in divinity, and perfect in humanity; in other words, in two natures and wills and activities (ἐνεργείαις) willing and acting as God, willing and acting as man, one and the same unconfusedly and undividedly having control (ἐξουσίαν) in both; and as you enter into his presence, supplicate him boldly (ἐν παρρησίᾳ) that the Church be preserved always maintaining this pious opinion.[32]

The status of the Theotokos as proof and guardian of the Christology of the Byzantine Orthodox Church could hardly be expressed more succinctly.

As one would expect, however, sermons were not primarily a place to parse scholastic terms, but rather an opportunity to expatiate on the relevance of the doctrines they described. The debates of the seventh century heightened attention to the human experiences of Christ, while remaining faithful to the foundational doctrine of the unity of his person as the incarnate Logos of God. One perennial challenge was how to depict the glory of the divinised human nature of Christ without straying over the subtle line into aphthartodocetism, the doctrine that held that Christ's humanity was already incorruptible from his birth, rather than rendered so as a result of his bodily resurrection. Emphasising Christ's human emotions and his death was one solution, and sermons offered an ideal venue for this. The Theotokos could be of help in both areas. What more innate emotion than the tender love between a mother and her child? And what more comforting an image of a good death than that of the soul of the all-holy Virgin being embraced by her divine Son?[33]

Andrew lays the groundwork for reflection on death in his first homily on the Dormition. Noting that human nature has been freed from death by Christ according to grace, but not yet according to nature, he goes on to present the Christian understanding of death. Since the death of the Lord, he says, death is not the ultimate end, but is rather like a form of sleep. The souls of all human beings pass through Hades but are not held there, unless they brought on themselves the death of sin through spiritual carelessness. Even the souls of saints experience this temporary passage through Hades,

[31] PG 86b, 3305B.

[32] Ps.-Modestos, *Homily on the Dormition*, PG 86b, 3304C.

[33] The importance of the fact that the Virgin actually died, according to the Greek Fathers, is underestimated by M. Jugie in his *La Mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge: Etude historico-doctrinale,* ST 144 (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1954), 214–43, due to his own 'Immortalist' position regarding the Assumption.

in order to understand better the economy of the Saviour.[34] Finally, even the soul of the Virgin sojourned in Hades for a brief time between her natural death and her supernatural resurrection, 'for as long a period as was necessary for the natural movement in the unknown regions required to receive knowledge by experience'.[35] Andrew does not link the Virgin's experience of death to that of her son directly, but rather through the preceding discussion of the death of the saints. He admits that he is merely speculating devoutly on a supernatural mystery. But by suggesting that she paid the debt to nature as we do, though in a way surpassing ours and the cause of ours, he may hint at a more direct comparison with the voluntary death of the sinless Lord.[36]

Germanos is more direct:

> You have moved on from our earthly life, in order that the awful mystery of God's becoming human be confirmed in more than mere appearance: in order that, as you are separated in this way from temporal things, we might come to believe that the God who was born of you came forth as a complete human being, the son of a real mother who was subject to the laws of natural necessity, [and that this happened] at the command of God's decree and subject to the temporal limitations of our life. You had a body just like one of us, and therefore you could not escape the event of death that is the common destiny of all human beings. In the same way, your Son, even though he is the God of all things, himself 'tasted death' (Heb 2:9), as we do, in his flesh, because of the dying human being, if I may put it this way, formed by the whole of our race. Surely he has performed miracles in his own life-giving tomb and in the life-giving sepulchre where you were laid to rest: both tombs really received bodies, yet neither of them was a workshop of decay.[37]

Later in the sermon Germanos gives more specific parallels. In order to anticipate the natural fear of death, Christ sends an angel to announce her coming decease, and as part of a long consolatory speech, Christ himself enjoins her: 'Place your body confidently in the field of Gethsemane, as I before my passion placed my knees there to pray as a man'.[38] Furthermore,

[34] Andrew, *Dormition* 1, PG 97, 1048–52.

[35] This is a very difficult phrase to translate, and I have tried only to give the gist of it: Οὕτω μοι νοήσεις αὐτῆς εἰς Ἅδου κατάβασιν, ἧς τοσαύτη γέγονεν ἐπ᾽αὐτῆς, κατά γε τὸν ἐμὸν ὅρον καὶ λόγον, τῇ διαστάσει τῶν μερῶν ἡ τοῦ καιροῦ ἐπικράτεια, ὅσης ἐδεῖτο τῆς φυσικῆς κινήσεως ἡ περίοδος ἐν τοῖς ἀγνώστοις χωρίοις πείρᾳ τὴν γνῶσιν λαβεῖν, πρώτως τούτοις ἐπιβατεύουσαν καὶ οἷα δι᾽ἀλλοδαπῆς καὶ ἀτριβοῦς πορείας διήκουσαν (PG 97, 1053A–B).

[36] Andrew, *Dormition* 1, PG 97, 1053C.

[37] Germanos, *Dormition* 1, PG 98, 345C–348A; translation from Daley, *Dormition of Mary*, 158 (including bracketed words).

[38] On natural fear of death (τῷ φυσικῷ τῆς σαρκὸς ἰδιώματι), see his *Dormition* I, PG 98, 360C; quotation above from 364A.

he emphasises the continued human feeling of Christ, since, as he makes the apostles state, it was 'by divine authority and carnal attachment to you, his mother, since he missed you, that God required that you depart to him'.[39] The words 'carnal' (*sarkikē*) and 'attachment' (*prospatheia*) very strongly, even shockingly, express Christ's filial feeling, as does the sense of 'missing' a loved one found in the word *epizēteō* along with the more formal sense of 'requiring'.

One of the theological factors in question here is addressed by the other homily on the Dormition, published by Wenger.[40] The author of that piece – almost certainly not Germanos – grapples with a problem that the other authors do not, namely, pain. He argues that the Theotokos was free from pain in dying because of the absence of pleasure in her conception.[41] Realising, however, that his audience might be scandalised by the fact that, whereas her Son suffered a painful death, she escaped it, the author explains: Christ willed to suffer on our behalf, he says, since otherwise we could not be liberated from slavery; but he also willed that his mother not suffer pain. She owed the debt of nature, having been born a mortal, but was not subject to the distress it normally involved, due to her purity from personal sin.[42] Finally, the author strives to turn this in a positive direction by pointing out the wonders evident in the Theotokos: she conceived without seed, gave birth without corruption and died without pain.[43]

John of Damascus' interpretation follows the general lines of the previous authors, but moves even further in the direction of assimilating the Theotokos to her child. The mother–child relationship is captured in a few lines in the *Homily on the Nativity*, from a passage in which John meditates on the mystery of God's election of one particular woman at one particular time to be the means of his redemptive incarnation:

> For from you alone did the Creator take a portion, the first fruits of our frame. His flesh is from your flesh, his blood from your blood; God nursed milk from your breasts, and your lips were united to God's lips.[44]

[39] Germanos, *Dormition* 1, PG 98, 365C.

[40] Wenger, 'Un nouveau témoin'.

[41] *Homily on the Dormition* 9, ed. Wenger, 'Un nouveau témoin', 50. The pleasure-pain connection (ἡδονή – ὀδύνη) recalls the thought of Maximos the Confessor, for which see C. Schönborn, 'Plaisir et douleur dans l'analyse de S. Maxime, d'après les Quaestiones ad Thalassium', in F. Heinzer and C. Schönborn, *Maximus Confessor. Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur. Fribourg, 2–5 septembre 1980*, Paradosis 27 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1982), 273–84.

[42] *Homily on the Dormition* 10, ed. Wenger, 'Un nouveau témoin', 50.

[43] *Homily on the Dormition* 11, ed. Wenger, 'Un nouveau témoin', 51.

[44] John, *Nativity* 7.26–9, Kotter, *Die Schriften,* vol. 5, 177.

The Dormition homilies are not so vivid in portraying the mother–child relationship, but it serves as the foundation for the miraculous events surrounding her death:

> As the holy and pure body from her, which took individual substance in God the Word, rose from the grave on the third day, so it was necessary that the mother be snatched from the tomb and sail over to her son; and as he descended to her, so it was fit for her, the beloved, to be borne up to him …[45]

John maps out further similarities in detail. Mary escaped the laws of nature in giving birth but submitted to them in undergoing death, just as her Son did not avoid death.[46] She is also assimilated to Christ through implicit comparisons: as the source of life (even when she undergoes death briefly); as purifying the air of the aerial demons by her assumption (something that Athanasius of Alexandria had attributed to Christ's being lifted up into the air on the Cross); as not being made blessed by death, but herself rendering it joyful and bright (compare this to Maximos the Confessor's statement that Christ's voluntary passion altered the use of death); as not seeing corruption in Hades, according to Psalm 15:10 (quoted by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:31 to prove that Jesus is the Christ).[47]

This tendency to use the person and history of the Theotokos as an opportunity to confirm and augment Christological dogma is summed up more poetically in Germanos' exclamation in his first homily on the Entrance of the Theotokos: 'Rejoice … fountain welling forth divinely, from which the rivers of divine knowledge rise in spate with the crystal-clear and splendid-shining water of orthodoxy and rinse away the slime of heresies.'[48] But assimilation of the Theotokos to her son was not without its critics. In his second

[45] John, *Dormition* 2.14.11–15, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 531.

[46] John, *Dormition* 1.10.1–8, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 494–5.

[47] John, *Dormition* 1.10.25–36; 1.11.1–3; 1.12.10–18; 1.12.31–5, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 495–8. On the purification of the air, cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word* 25.5–6, ed. C. Kannengiesser, *Sur l'Incarnation du Verbe*, SC 199 (Paris: Cerf, 1973), 356–9. But note that in the earlier Dormition traditions, Mary prays to Christ to deliver her from the demonic powers in the air: e.g. *Transitus Mariae* B 7/8, ed. C. Tischendorff, *Apocalypses apocryphae* (Leipzig: Herm. Mendelssohn, 1866), 129; and even into the early seventh century, in John of Thessalonike, *On the Dormition* 4, in M. Jugie (ed.), *Homélies mariales byzantines,* vol. 2, PO 19 (Paris: Graffin, 1925; republ. Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 380–1. For discussion of this feature in the different versions of Mary's dormition, see J. Rivière, 'Rôle du démon au jugement particulier: contribution à l'histoire des "Transitus Mariae"', *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 48 (1947): 49–56, 98–126. On the altering of the use of death according to Maximos, see his *Responses to Thalassios* 61, l. 156ff., ed. Steel and Laga, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, vol. 2, 93ff.

[48] Germanos, *Homily on the Entrance of the Theotokos* 1, PG 98, 305B: πηγὴ ἡ θεόβρυτος, ἀφ᾽ἧς οἱ τῆς θεογνωσίας ποταμοὶ τὸ διειδέστατον καὶ ἀγλαοφανὲς τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας ὕδωρ διαῤῥέοντες, ἴλην [*conieci* ἴλυν] τὴν τῶν αἱρέσεων ἐκμειοῦσιν.

homily on the Entrance, Germanos apostrophises certain detractors of the Theotokos. They are described as of an opinion alien to the people of God, and he prays to her: 'Let their image be reduced to nothing in your city', a paraphrase of the Psalmist's entreaty to God in Psalm 72:20 (note, again, the elision of Christological and Mariological references that is common in our authors). It is impossible to know for sure who these mysterious enemies of the Theotokos are: they may simply be Jews, since they are compared to those who maligned the Theotokos and her son in the days of old, but this interpretation does not exclude a broader allusion to Christian sceptics, perhaps even the nascent iconoclast movement.[49] John of Damascus may have similar critics in view when, in the second of his homilies on the Dormition, he indignantly denies that the Church worships the Theotokos in a Hellenic manner, as a goddess; or he may even be rebutting a Muslim mischaracterisation of Christian devotion to Mary, expressed in Qur'an 5.116.[50]

The one text where enemies of the Theotokos are clearly named does involve Muslims. In his *Homily on the Akathist*, Germanos depicts the Muslim besiegers of Constantinople in 717–18 as speaking contemptuously against the Theotokos as a mere weak woman, and boasting that they would turn her church (perhaps that of Blachernae) into a mosque; while, conversely, the Theotokos is portrayed as reacting to their blasphemies against Christ with a motherly jealousy for the honour of her Son.[51] The role of the Theotokos as defender of Church and City was already well established by the time our authors mounted the pulpit. I will now proceed to show how our preachers reflected at some length on the relation of the Theotokos to both Church and City. While sharing a sense of the universality of the Church, they varied somewhat in their appraisal of its earthly centre, influenced as they were by their own particular geopolitical realities.

Ecclesiology

Constantinople's role as Queen City of the empire and, increasingly, of the Eastern Church was grounded partly in its concrete political, military and administrative role.[52] But to serve as the focus of the loyalty of the citizens

49 See Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 39–40 on this passage, and also 249, n. 5, for comments on a similar passage in Germanos, *Homily on the Girdle* 4, PG 98, 376B.

50 John, *Dormition* 2.15.31–5, Kotter, *Die Schriften,* vol. 5, 533–4.

51 Germanos, *Homily on the Akathist* 13–14 and 10, ed. Grumel, 'Homélie de S. Germain', 194–5.

52 For Constantinople in comparative framework see C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 591–692. For the role of the Theotokos in the

of the empire, it also had to appeal to hearts and minds. The cult of saints played a key role in this patriotic gravitational pull, diffused both in the immediate homeland and to the larger empire through liturgical commemoration. In particular, the patron saint of Constantinople, the Theotokos, was also a kind of universal patron. Her cult was ubiquitous and served to symbolise the Church as Body of Christ. This was an easy transference since she was the source of her son's incarnate body; as Germanos states, 'you constituted a Christian people for him out of your own flesh, and you rendered those of like nature to you conformed to his divine and assimilative image'.[53] Therefore this people (*laos*) belonged to her just as much as to Christ and she was praised as the fountain of true belief, as noted above.[54]

But while there was plenty of discussion of her *body* in theological reflection, as we have already seen, her relation to the Church was expressed more through depicting her as a heavenly *city*, lavished with the epithets of the biblical Jerusalem.[55] This urban typology is especially prominent in Germanos. He portrays the Theotokos as having received power over all things from her son. Exhibiting the imperial and episcopal virtue of solicitude, she delivers the Christian commonwealth from both earthly and spiritual danger; her feasts were thus occasions for celebrating the various elements of the Christian polity.[56]

Epithets for the Church blended easily with those for Constantinople and its empire. In homily 5, on the Annunciation, Germanos declares that 'in her [i.e. in the Theotokos] forever compassed with ramparts, the animate

city's self-consciousness, see A. Cameron, 'The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople: A City Finds its Symbol', *JTS* 29 (1978): 79–108; A. Cameron, 'Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium', *Past and Present* 84 (Aug. 1979): 3–35; C. Mango, 'Constantinople as Theotokoupolis', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens: Skira, 2000), 17–25.

[53] Germanos, *Dormition* 1, PG 98, 353B. Cf. the use of a leaven metaphor by Andrew, discussed above, n. 29.

[54] Germanos, *Dormition* 1, PG 98,352B; *Entrance* I, PG 98, 305B. Another set of images – 'support of the faithful, diadem of the Church, engraved seal of Orthodoxy, gold coin of truth' (*Homily on the Annunciation*, ed. Fecioru, 'Un nou', 394.32–3) – is replete with imperial associations, but is copied from a text attributed to Proclus of Constantinople, *Encomium of the Theotokos* 17.15, ed. F. J. Leroy, *L'Homilétique de Proclus de Constantinople*, Studi e Testi 247 (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1967), 324 (the attribution is disputed; cf. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 50, on another (Ps.-?)Proclan interpolation). It does, however, show that Germanos himself or, more likely, a later scribe, believed the thought to be congenial to the tone of Germanos' homily.

[55] Germanos, *Entrance* 1, PG 98, 305D.

[56] Germanos, *Dormition* 2, PG 98, 356A; Germanos, *On the Akathist* 18.22, Grumel, 'Homélie de S. Germain', 196, 198.

and honourable and God-ruled city takes pride'.[57] Likewise, the Church as the new and spiritual Israel was hard to distinguish from the Romans, saved by the stormy waters of the Bosporus from latter-day Egyptians.[58] Consequently, Germanos, in his *Homily on the Akathist*, states that the Theotokos ought to be honoured by all Christians for her contribution to the incarnation, but especially by the denizens of Constantinople for their miraculous deliverance from the Arab siege of 717–18. This, again, had consequences for the rest of the *oikoumene*, the inhabited world, whose only rightful overlord was the Roman emperor.

> [She delivered us from] such dangers as our city had never before experienced, or rather not even the ends of the whole civilised world, in which the Christian name and way of life is found! For the whole complement of the flock of Christ would without hesitation acknowledge that it would have run the same risk as us if the Saracens who fight the confession of his glory managed to successfully accomplish their campaign against us.[59]

The identification of the Church with the Theotokos, and of both with the Empire, was represented by church architecture. In his first homily on the Dormition, Germanos says that her glory is reflected in the splendour of the various churches dedicated to her:

> For what race of human beings, except Christians, has been blessed with such glory or is privileged with such a reputation? The angels luxuriate in their heavenly dwellings, but we rejoice to take our leisure in your holy temples. For if the temple of Solomon once represented heaven in an earthly image, will not the temples built in honor of you, who became the living temple of Christ, all the more justly be celebrated as heavens on earth? The stars speak out with tongues of flame in the heavenly firmament; and the material colors of your icons, O Mother of God, dazzle us with the representation of your gifts. The sun and the moon illumine one pole of the sky above and around us; but every house, every city and region, shines with your light, which comes from the light of the Son you bore.[60]

Such liturgical consciousness could be even more narrowly focused on churches of Constantinople associated with the wonder-working relics of

[57] Germanos, *Annunciation*, PG 98, 321A, ed. Fecioru, 'Un nou', 71.5–6: ἐν ᾗι ἡ ἔμψυχος καὶ ἔντιμος καὶ θεοβασίλευτος πόλις ἀεὶ τειχιζομένη σεμνύνεται.

[58] Germanos, *On the Akathist* 20, Grumel, 'Homélie de S. Germain', 204.

[59] Germanos, *On the Akathist* 9, Grumel, 'Homélie de S. Germain', 193–4. The same sentiment is in fact found a century earlier in the *Homily on the Avar Siege* by Theodore Synkellos; see F. Makk, *Traduction et commentaire de l'homélie écrite probablement par Théodore le Syncelle sur le siège de Constantinople en 626* (Szeged: Attila József University, 1975), 74.13–16.

[60] Germanos, *Dormition* 1, PG 98, 356B–C; translation from Daley, *Dormition of Mary*, 164.

the Virgin that served as the city's palladia. Thus, we read in Germanos' homily on the anniversary of the consecration of the Chalkoprateia, where her girdle and Jesus' swaddling clothes were kept:

> 'Glorious things have been spoken of you, O City of God' (Ps 86:3) … She is indeed a glorified city; she is the intelligible Sion. It is her, I think, whom David addressed by divine inspiration. And if one should call her house a glorified city, he would not fall outside truth and goodness in so speaking … For if she became the animate city of Christ the king, it is right that her all-holy temple, whose Inauguration we also now celebrate, is a glorified city and is so designated.[61]

Germanos' encomium of the Chalkoprateia as a holy city in which the church gathered could have been echoed in the several churches dedicated to its counterpart and rival in Marian veneration, the Blachernae (where her robe was kept), in various provinces.[62] In the eighth- or ninth-century *Life of Andrew of Crete*, Andrew is said to have built a new church to the Theotokos in Crete as a thanksgiving offering and to have named it after the Blachernae.[63] There were Blachernae churches at least in Ravenna and Cherson as well, notably, both Byzantine military outposts in distant lands.[64]

Yet for all the blending of the idea of the Church with that of the ecumenical empire, Germanos maintained a sense of the distinction between earthly and heavenly citizenship. Immediately after the passage just quoted he describes the Church as 'a city that does not enrol her subjects as citizens of an earthly and mortal king, but of the heavenly, of the one who sends them over to eternal life and who grants his own kingdom to those who follow him'.[65] It is possible that this emphasis is an implicit criticism of the iconoclast policy of Leo III. Such an interpretation was suggested by Grumel for the homily on the *Akathist* because it attributes the breaking of the siege

[61] Germanos, *On the Girdle*, PG 98, 372D–373A.

[62] On the Chalkoprateia and Blachernae churches and rivalry between them, see D. Krausmüller, 'Making the Most of Mary: The Cult of the Virgin in the Chalkoprateia from Late Antiquity to the Tenth Century', in Brubaker and Cunningham (eds.), *Cult of the Mother of God*, 219–46.

[63] Niketas, *Life of Andrew*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Βίος τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀνδρέου τοῦ Ἱεροσολυμίτου', 176, ll. 4–7.

[64] The dyothelete confessor Pope Martin I of Rome was buried at the Church of Blachernae outside the walls of Cherson, according to Theodore Spoudaios, *Commemoration* 8, ed. and trans. P. Allen and B. Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 160–3. The monastery of Blachernae in Ravenna is mentioned in the work of its abbot, Agnellus, in his *Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*, Prefatory Verses, 26, 119, 162 and 167, ed. D. M. Deliyannis, *Agnelli Ravennatis Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 140 ll. 52–3, 173 ll. 77–8, 291 ll. 70–1, 339 ll. 28–9, 348 ll. 10–11.

[65] Germanos, *On the Girdle*, PG 98, 373B.

of Constantinople in 718 to the aid of the Virgin without once mentioning the emperor.[66] The Theotokos, whose image had been mobilised by late sixth-century emperors to lend support to imperial authority, could also be invoked to challenge that authority.[67]

John of Damascus uses the imagery of Theotokos as city, but in connection with Jerusalem rather than Constantinople.[68] He points out that the church of Holy Sion, where he was preaching, was the location of various gospel events, as well as of the Dormition itself.[69] He praises Sion as the divine mountain wherein dwelt the living divine mountain, the Theotokos.[70] And he extols the church of Mary of the Sheep Gate, drawing on a tradition that it had been a sheepfold owned by the Virgin's father, Joachim, and declaring that it was now 'a heaven-imitating church of the rational flock of Christ'.[71] Yet in his discourse one senses a constant striving to ascend from a particular church to the Church Triumphant, to lift up the earthly into the celestial. Thus the daughters of Jerusalem are glossed as the daughters of the Church, and its queens (Cant 6:9) as the souls of the righteous.[72] The kings and rulers of all the earth, identified as the apostles appointed by Christ, see off the body of the Virgin from the earthly Jerusalem to the Jerusalem on high, the true promised land and mother of all Christians.[73] Likewise the gathered people are identified as the people (*laos*) belonging to Christ, and through him, to his Mother.[74] In the conclusion of the final homily of the trilogy, John prays that the holy city might *become* holy and receive eternal blessings.[75] Thus the transition of the Theotokos from earth to heaven is presented as a challenge for all Christians to realise their calling. On a more horizontal level, John acknowledges that the benefits conferred from the

66 Grumel, 'Homélie de S. Germain', 88.

67 Cf. Cameron, 'Images of Authority'.

68 For the Theotokos as city, see e.g. John, *Dormition* 1.1.6–14, ed. Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 483, quoting Ps 86:3, among other biblical verses.

69 John, *Dormition* 2.4.8ff., Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 522.

70 John, *Dormition* 3.4.6–9, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 552.

71 John, *Nativity* 1.1.1–13, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 169.

72 John, *Dormition* 1.8.17–19, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 492.

73 John, *Dormition* 2.3.37–41, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 521; cf. John, *Dormition* 3.2.6–8, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 549. For more metaphors of the Church, see *Dormition* 3.3.5ff., Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 551, where the Old Testament Mariam is interpreted as the Church, and the young women accompanying her in the dance of victory as the *neanides* of the spiritual Israel; he also summons the kings of earth and rulers, young men and maidens, old men with younger, and various nations and tongues (cf. Ps 148). A little later, at *Dormition* 3.3.15–18, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 551, in an allusion to Ps 113:4, the rams of the Church are taken to be the apostles and the lambs the holy people, the nurslings of the Church.

74 John, *Dormition* 2.8.25 and 2.16.1–2, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 526 and 534.

75 Cf. John, *Nativity* 11.13, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 181, where he prays that the grace of the Church of the Sheep Gate increase.

tomb of the Theotokos are great, yet he adds that the grace of God through her is not limited to this tomb, lest only a few benefit, but is distributed to the ends of the earth.[76]

Andrew takes a similar approach, bringing together devotion to the pilgrimage sites of his childhood home, Jerusalem, with contemplation of the heavenly mysteries they symbolise. In his first homily on the Dormition, in light of the novelty of the feast for his audience, he appeals to the visible evidence for it, namely, the tomb of Theotokos, giving precise details of its location, and claiming that the grooves where her limbs lay were still discernible in the living rock of the sepulchral cave.[77] He then shifts course, recommending an actual visit and inspection of the site only for those lacking faith; the faithful, he asserts, would be content to use the report of things seen as a starting point for reflection on things unseen.[78] Toward the end of the homily, he lays out a programme for such reflection, leading his audience imaginatively in the Theotokos' funeral procession from her house at Holy Sion (the location at which John of Damascus preached his sermons on the Dormition, as already mentioned) out of the city to Gethsemane; yet this presupposes acquaintance with the topography of Jerusalem, 'for you will have no need of long speeches to provide you with knowledge if you gaze on the events'.[79] One senses a certain tension here between Andrew's own vivid memories of the pilgrimage sites and his commitment to promoting a rigorous ascent to more spiritual contemplation.

Turning from the events of the Dormition to metaphors for the Mother of God and for the Church, we find Andrew, in his second homily on the Dormition, calling the Church 'Queen of the nations', whereas in the third homily, he calls the Theotokos 'Queen of all human nature'.[80] Finally, in

[76] John, *Dormition* 2.19.1–5, Kotter, *Die Schriften*, vol. 5, 539.

[77] That the feast was novel to his audience suggests that Andrew was preaching not in Constantinople, where the feast had been officially placed on the calendar by the emperor Maurice in the late sixth century, but in Crete, which was ecclesiastically under the jurisdiction of Old Rome, where the feast was only adopted in the late seventh century; see Daley, *Dormition of Mary*, 68, n. 1, who uses this logic with regard to the early seventh-century Dormition sermon by John of Thessalonike (a city also traditionally under Roman jurisdiction), but does not extend it to the case of Andrew. Andrew's mention that he is a 'stranger and newcomer' (PG 97, 1084B) also suggests that he was preaching in Crete shortly after his installation as bishop (Daley, *Dormition of Mary*, 16–17).

[78] Andrew, *Dormition* 1, PG 97, 1056D–1057B; note that this passage is placed by Andrew in the mouth of the Theotokos herself.

[79] Andrew, *Dormition* 1, PG 97, 1064Dff.

[80] Andrew, *Dormition* 2, PG 97, 1080C and *Dormition* 3, PG 97, 1100A. Andrew has a remarkably optimistic view of the sway of Christianity, given the rapid rise of Islam in his period: in *Homily on the Nativity of the Theotokos* 1, PG 97, 829CD, he states that all nations to the ends of the earth worship Christ!

his third homily on the Dormition, as part of an appeal to various biblical sites to join in the celebration, after urging Jerusalem to send forth the 'Metropolis of God' – that is, the Theotokos – he exhorts 'Mother Sion' to summon her daughters, the Gentile churches.[81] Andrew does not once mention Constantinople in all this Marian and urban imagery. This cannot be due to his lack of loyalty to the capital and to the state, nor to the probable location of at least the Dormition homilies in Crete: his fiercest expression of imperial patriotism is found in his encomium of the Ten Martyrs of Crete. Furthermore, as noted above, his erection of a Blachernae church in Crete would have implied strong Constantinopolitan links.[82]

It is possible that his silence regarding the Queen City and its rulers in the Marian homilies was due to dissent from the developing imperial policy of Iconoclasm, as suggested for some of Germanos' sermons above.[83] An alternative explanation might be that Andrew preferred to emphasise the Theotokos as a figure bringing together all segments of society in harmonious unity, rather than her 'geopolitical' role. In his first homily on the Nativity of the Theotokos, in keeping with the feast's themes of the miraculous conception and birth of the Virgin Mother from an infertile couple, he especially emphasises common participation in the feast by people of different marital and familial status: fathers, mothers, barren women, virgins, married folk. But he then proceeds to draw on biblical language in inviting a broader cross-section of society: 'All together, rich and poor, young men and maidens, elders with youths, priests and Levites, queens and ruling women …'[84] A similar invitation toward the end of the third homily on the Dormition adds to the latter list of different social groups, fathers and patriarchs, prophets and priests, apostles and martyrs, holy teachers and righteous people and ascetic saints, and 'every rank and age: kings [or: emperors] and the mighty, rulers and ruled'; and then, to the former

[81] Andrew, *Dormition* 3, PG 97, 1101D–1104A; cf. Ps 86:5 (LXX).

[82] See e.g. Andrew, *Homily on the Ten Martyrs of Crete* (*CPG* 8195/BHG 1197d) 11.3, ed. Basileios Laourdas, 'Ἀνδρέου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κρήτης τοῦ Ἱεροσολυμίτου, Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους δέκα καὶ καλλινίκους Μάρτυρας', *Κρητικὰ Χρονικά* 3 (1949): 101–17, at p. 117, ll. 501–10. For the Cretan location of the homilies, see above n. 77.

[83] The closest he comes to anything resembling a political statement in his Marian homilies is ascribing to the Theotokos the neutralisation of the 'weapons of barbarians', in *Dormition* 3, PG 97, 1108C.

[84] Andrew, *Nativity* 1, 817D–820A. Conspicuous here is the mention of female rulers rather than male ones; this might imply censure of Leo III, as suggested above, but it may simply be in keeping with the special focus on women (cf. Ps 148:11; the reference to rich and poor comes from Ps 48:3). For another invitation emphasising the community of women of various states and statuses – barren women, mothers, virgins – see the same homily, 809C.

list of women, adds brides and widows and daughters, before expanding to a more cosmic scale with an appeal to all nations, tongues and tribes of the earth.[85] As a whole these lists indicate interest on Andrew's part in the role of the Theotokos as a mediator of social divisions. Even his invocation of various sections of the ruling elite, including emperors and empresses, seems to be more inward-looking, so to speak, in contrast to Germanos' focus on the more external aspects of the empire.

It remains for us to glance briefly at the ecclesiological content of our remaining source, the homily on the Dormition attributed to Modestos. In a virtuoso passage, the anonymous author combines the nuptial imagery of the Theotokos drawn typologically from Psalm 44 with the nuptial imagery of Christ and the Church from Ephesians 5:

> She who had become the all-glorious bridal chamber of the hypostatic union of the natures of Christ, the true heavenly bridegroom, has entered the bridal suite of heaven, while all the holy powers of heaven long for his supernatural beauty. The immaculate spiritual chamber, from which the King of the ages came forth in making his descent to us, has been transferred to the Jerusalem on high, since like a soldier the King has put to flight the enemy with all his armies. Christ our God, in fact, when he grew to manhood, betrothed his orthodox Church to himself, and poured forth for her his precious blood and gave his life; in the words of Paul, that light of the world so rich in divine wisdom: 'This is a great mystery: but I speak of Christ and of the Church' (Eph 5:32). She who is higher than the cherubim and seraphim, since she has been designated Mother of their Lord, has now come to live in the Kingdom of heaven.[86]

This statement draws together all the threads of the variegated tapestry of Marian narratives in early medieval Byzantium discussed above. There is the technical Chalcedonian language of the two natures of Christ united in his one hypostasis. There is the use of an image, in this case the bridal chamber, symbolically to express this union in the case of Christ himself, as head, and in its outworking in the Church, as body. These two poles are mediated by the body of the Mother of Christ, the Theotokos. The idea is summed up even more concisely by a phrase that the author applies to her four times in the course of the homily, σύσσωμος ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ, 'of one body in incorruption', a leitmotif which, like the Pauline imagery in the quotation, comes from the Epistle to the Ephesians (3:6), where it refers to the

[85] Andrew, *Dormition* 3, PG 97, 1104BC. Cf. similar lists in John of Damascus, mentioned in n. 73 above.

[86] Ps.-Modestos, *Homily on the Dormition* 3, PG 86b, 3288A–B; translation from Daley, *Dormition of Mary*, 87, slightly modified.

incorporation of the Gentiles into the Church as fellow-heirs, with the Jews, of the promises of God.[87]

Unlike our named authors, however, there is no concrete reference to the contemporary social or political situation. Even the use of a military metaphor, Christ's taking on the lowly form of a private soldier in order to rout the powers of evil, is used to invoke the heavenward momentum of the Virgin's body rather than the defeat of any earthly enemies. While even Germanos' conjectured censure of the emperor through passing over his name in silence still made room for a positive conception of the imperial capital, our anonymous author passes over in silence even qualified geographical allegiance. This, when juxtaposed with the explicitly dyothelete statements in the text, leads me to speculate that it might have been written by someone at some point before the Sixth Ecumenical Council who felt himself both a dissident from monothelete-controlled Constantinople and a stranger from Muslim-conquered Jerusalem.[88]

Conclusion

The texts that we have examined in this chapter draw on a long tradition of Christological reflection on the person of the Theotokos. By virtue of the physical and emotional reality of motherhood she guaranteed the reality of the human nature assumed by Christ in the incarnation; and through the holiness of her body and soul, she demonstrated the benefit of the incarnation for all who share in human nature. Our authors share a repertoire of technical terms, poetical symbols and narrative traditions, yet we have noted differences in their deployment. For example, John of Damascus and Ps.-Modestos prefer Christological formulas, perhaps reflecting a Palestinian theological culture that allowed, or demanded, more development of the technical language of theology than was the case within the territories ruled from Constantinople.

We have also seen a shared repertoire of language for the Theotokos that evokes ideas of the Church as body, bride, city, mountain and more. Germanos proceeds to connect this language to Constantinople and, by extension, the

[87] The phrase is found with minor differences of grammatical inflection and word order in Ps.-Modestos' *Dormition* 5, 6, 10, and in its concluding section 14, PG 86b, 3289C, 3293A, 3301B, 3312B. The Ephesians verse is also used in Germanos' *On the Akathist* 7, ed. Grumel, 'Homélie de saint Germain', 193, but there it refers to Christ and Christians.

[88] Perhaps even by someone in the circle of Sophronios of Jerusalem and Maximos Confessor; cf. Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, esp. chs. 6 and 7 (pp. 225–328).

Byzantine Empire. His position as patriarch of Constantinople doubtless contributed to this choice, although he was also capable of maintaining the classic Christian distinction between earthly and heavenly citizenship. Our other two named authors instead choose to connect the complex of Theotokos–Church imagery to Jerusalem, though with eschatological and mystical caveats. The sermon attributed to Modestos stands out as the only one completely free of geopolitical ties. Though this freedom is, admittedly, deduced *e silentio*, when juxtaposed with the other sermons, the silence is thunderous. In addition to these different urban axes, I have suggested differences between Germanos and Andrew, with the former emphasising more the city and empire in the face of external threats – a more 'political' approach – while the latter seems more concerned with the internal cohesion of the ecclesiastical and civic community – a more 'social' approach.

It remains for us to ask briefly about the significance of all these words. Were they simply the eloquent yet irrelevant ramblings of a rarefied clerical elite? Or can they be understood as expressions of contemporary religious culture, both shaped by and shaping the piety of Byzantine believers of the early eighth century? Such questions raise larger issues in Byzantine homiletics that continue to be studied and debated, but it has been suggested that the high linguistic and rhetorical register of sermons such as these was not necessarily a barrier to comprehension, especially when aided by the traditional techniques that structured Greek speeches, such as use of commonplaces and of anaphora.[89] I would add that the people who counted most as movers and shakers, both in clerical and imperial circles, were more likely to understand, and to pride themselves on that fact. Furthermore, if any theological symbol could bring together the literati and the unlettered, it was the Mother of God – Andrew of Crete was on to something in emphasising her social role. Taking all this into consideration, then, homilies on the feasts of the Theotokos from the early eighth century can rightly be studied as sources for writing a narrative of longer term reception of the implications of such grand political and theological events as the sieges of Constantinople by the Arabs in 667–9 and 717–18 and the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680–1.

[89] For this view see, among others, Cunningham, 'Andrew of Crete'.

13 The Homilies of James of Kokkinobaphos in their Twelfth-Century Context

ELIZABETH JEFFREYS

The Kokkinobaphos Homilies that are the focus of this chapter are a set of six sermons, or homilies,[1] on the Mother of God which were written in Greek in Constantinople in the middle years of the twelfth century. Whilst they are in many ways idiosyncratic, they are nonetheless a significant element in the reception of Marian material at this time. They present in sermon form an encomiastic narrative on the Virgin from her conception until her vindication from charges of unchaste living when found to be pregnant; perhaps surprisingly, they stop short of an account of her son's birth and do not deal with the later stages of her life. The heading to the homilies names the author as Iakovos (or James) from the monastery of Kokkinobaphos.[2] In one way these homilies are very well known in Byzantine and medieval studies since they survive in two magnificently illustrated manuscripts whose painter, now known to modern scholarship as the Kokkinobaphos Master, was employed by the Komnenian elite in the production of deluxe manuscripts in the middle years of the twelfth century.[3] The images in the manuscripts of the Kokkinobaphos Homilies are much discussed and reproduced, and can now be easily viewed online.[4] On the other hand, the

[1] The terms used in English (homily, sermon) for Byzantine ecclesiastical discourses (ὁμιλία, λόγος, ἐγκώμιον) lack precise definition; a convention has developed, however, to refer to the texts discussed here as homilies. On the processes of preaching in Byzantium, with a focus on the early period, the papers in M. B. Cunningham and P. Allen (eds.), *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) remain valuable; see also M. Cunningham, 'Homilies', in E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon and R. Cormack (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 872–81 and most recently T. Antonopoulou, 'Byzantine Homiletics: An Introduction to the Field and its Study', in K. Spronk, G. Rouwhorst and S. Roy (eds.), *Catalogue of Byzantine Manuscripts in their Liturgical Context*, vol. 1: *Challenges and Perspectives* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 183–98.

[2] The location of this monastery remains unknown but its existence is recorded independently by three lead seals from the eleventh or twelfth century and a non-scribal ownership entry in Vat. gr. 338; see E. Jeffreys and M. Jeffreys (eds.), *Iacobi monachi epistulae* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), p. xxii.

[3] See e.g. J. C. Anderson, 'The Seraglio Octaeuch and the Kokkinobaphos Master', *DOP* 36 (1982): 84–114; and A.-M. Weyl Carr, *Byzantine Illumination, 1150–1350* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 4.

[4] Vatican, BAV, Vat.gr. 1162 = V; facsimiles: S. Stornajolo, *Giacomo monaco (cod. Vatic. gr. 1162) e dell'evangeliario greco urbinate (cod. Vatic. Urbin. 2)* (Rome, 1910) and I. Hutter and P.

words on which the images depend are much less accessible since they are only imperfectly available in an incomplete nineteenth-century edition; there is no translation into a modern language.[5]

The current scholarly consensus considers that behind the homilies, both the text and manuscripts, stands the problematic figure of the sevastokratorissa Eirene.[6] Of uncertain, but probably non-Byzantine, background, she was the wife, then widow, of Andronikos (d. 1142), the second son of John II Komnenos; she died ca. 1152/3.[7] During the decade of her widowhood she was a lavish patron of both writers and artists, but at the same time was intermittently subjected to great hostility from the emperor Manuel, her brother-in-law. Although ignored by the official histories of Manuel's reign, many details of her ill-treatment can be found in the verse written for her, and often in her persona, by Manganeios Prodromos, a member of her household who also aspired to write ceremonial verse for the emperor.[8] Corroboration of Eirene's difficulties can be found in the letters addressed to her by her spiritual father, who was the monk Iakovos of the homilies.[9] It is, however, difficult to mesh the testimony of Manganeios and

Canart, *Das Marienhomilar des Monchs Jakobos von Kokkinobaphos: Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1162* (Zurich: Belser, 1991); http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1162. Paris, BnF, gr. 1208 = P; facsimile: H. Omont, *Miniatures des Homélies sur la Vierge du moine Jacques (ms. gr. 1208 de Paris)* (Paris, 1928); via Mandragore, the BnF's portal for digitised manuscripts (http://mandragore.bnf.fr/html/accueil.html, and follow the links).

5 See PG 127, 543–700; this reproduces the editions of A. Ballerini, *Sylloge monumentorum ad mysterium conceptionis immaculatæ Virginis deiparæ illustrandum* (Rome, 1854–8), and, for homily 2, F. Combefis, *Græcolat. patrum bibliothecæ novum auctarium* (Paris, 1648). It should be noted that the text in PG is not complete and does not follow the homilies' numbering in the manuscripts: thus in PG 127 cols. 543–68 = homily 1; cols. 567–600 = homily 2; cols. 599–632 = homily 3; cols. 631–60 = homily 5, printed as homily 4; cols. 659–98 = homily 6, printed as homily 5, and with the second half of the text omitted; cols. 697–700 = homily 4, small portion only. The translations in this chapter are my own.

6 On Eirene, see recently (with earlier bibliography), E. Jeffreys, 'The Sevastokratorissa Eirene as Patron', in M. Grünbart, M. Mullett and L. Theis (eds.), *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond* (Vienna, 2014 = *Wiener Jahrbuch der Kunstgeschichte* 60/61, 2011/12 [published 2014]), 177–94.

7 On Andronikos, see K. Varzos, *Ἡ γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν*, vol. I (Thessalonike: Kentron vyzantinon ereunon, 1984), no. 76, 357–79; Eirene is discussed ibid., 361–78.

8 This otherwise anonymous poet derives his modern nickname from his numerous requests for admission to the *adelphaton* of the Mangana monastery; he is to be distinguished from his versatile contemporary Theodore Prodromos. In the absence of the long promised edition of Manganeios' 148 poems, which will use the poem numbering in Mioni's catalogue, the basic bibliography can be found in E. Mioni, *Biblioteca Divi Marci Venetiarum codices graeci manuscripti,* vol. 3 (Venice: Istituto poligrafico e zecca dello Stato, 1970), 116–31, and P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143–1080* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 494–500 (with additional bibliography up to 1993).

9 Jeffreys and Jeffreys, *Epistulae*, xiv–xxiv. The case that the Iakovos of the letters was to be identified with the Iakovos of the homilies was first pressed hard by J. C. Anderson, 'The

Iakovos into a single coherent chronology. That the Iakovos of the single manuscript in which the letters to Eirene survive is to be identified with the Iakovos of Kokkinobaphos of the homilies has taken time to be accepted: key arguments are the relative rarity of the name Iakovos, the similarity in compositional technique used in both homilies and letters, and the shared scribal and painterly environment for the three manuscripts in which these texts are preserved. However, Eirene's role in the generation of the homilies, both the text and the manuscripts, has yet to be satisfactorily elucidated.

The phrasing of the heading to the homilies suggests that they are tied to Marian feasts: 'The work of Iakovos the monk, from the monastery of Kokkinobaphos, set out in six homilies composed for the feasts of the all-holy Theotokos'.[10] But this is only partially true. Homily 1 deals with the Conception of the Virgin (celebrated 9 December), Homily 2 with her Birth (celebrated 8 September) and Homily 3 with her Presentation in the Temple, or Entry into the Holy of Holies (celebrated 21 November); Homily 4 is on her departure from the Temple (not a feast day), Homily 5 on the Annunciation (celebrated 25 March); Homily 6 covers a mixed collection of non-festal themes derived from the apocryphal *Protevangelium of James*,[11] starting with the distribution of the purple wool for the weaving of the Temple curtain and ending with the trial of Mary and Joseph for scandalous conduct, when they were tested by drinking the water of reproach (as set out in Num 5:24). Thus in practice these texts are not well organised to offer preaching for the regular festivals celebrating the Mother of God, which had been long established by the mid-twelfth century. Homilies 4 and 6 celebrate a number of non-festal events, notably the trial with which the series ends, while the homily series comes to an end without mention of major festivals such as the Nativity of Christ and the Koimesis (or

Illustrated Sermons of James the Monk: Their Dates, Order and Place in the History of Byzantine Art', *Viator* 22 (1991): 69–120, at 85–95.

[10] V1bv, P2v: Πόνεμα Ἰακώβου μοναχοῦ τοῦ ἐκ τῆς μονῆς τοῦ Κοκκινοβάφου, ἐν ἓξ λόγοις ἀπαρτιζόμενον συντεθεῖσι μὲν εἰς τὰς ἑορτὰς τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου. In P the phrase μοναχοῦ τοῦ ἐκ τῆς μονῆς τοῦ Κοκκινοβάφου has been almost completely erased. In both V and P there follows a list of the six homilies, and a concluding comment: ἐκλεγεῖσι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν θείων γραφῶν (and selected [i.e. the homilies] from the holy scriptures).

[11] Probably dating from the second century AD. The standard edition is E. de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961); for a translation see O. Cullmann, in W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 421–39. For the role played by the *Protevangelium* in the development of Marian material, see M. B. Cunningham, 'The Use of the *Protevangelion of James* in the Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 163–78.

Dormition): there is no sign in the manuscripts that these homilies ever extended beyond their present length. Thus the context in which they were to be used is somewhat puzzling.[12]

The homilies' heading ends with the comment that their content is 'selected from sacred writings' (ἐκλεγεῖσι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν θείων γραφῶν), a phrase that suggests use of the scriptures. This alludes to Iakovos' unusually extensive use of quotations to construct his discourses – the stylistic peculiarity that has permitted modern scholarship to accept his authorship of both letters and homilies. This cento-like technique has parallels in a tenth-century fashion for constructing homilies which are stated by their authors to be compilations, ἐκλογαί; examples survive by Theodore Daphnopates and Symeon Metaphrastes,[13] though neither of these authors uses this practice elsewhere in their writings. In the case of Iakovos' homilies, the use of the scriptures in a strict sense of books from the Bible is limited to isolated phrases; the narrative structure is taken from the *Protevangelium* (itself apocryphal rather than canonical) while the encomiastic elements are largely drawn from the late ninth-century work of George of Nikomedia. Only around a half of Iakovos' sources have so far been found. However, his practice in the letters, where only about 5 per cent of the wording can be attributed to Iakovos himself, suggests that in the homilies he too will have composed comparatively little independently:[14] the letters are woven out of a dense tapestry of quotations from patristic authors. One of the results of this compositional technique is that there are awkward shifts in register and sense. In the letters these awkwardnesses are frequent since the quotations are often small and Iakovos has not always carried out all the adaptations necessary to make convincing meaning.[15] In the homilies, so far as can be seen with certainty, the quotations are longer so there are fewer occasions

[12] The places, times and contexts in which preaching took place were many: during the liturgy, the services of *orthros* and vespers, and pre-feast vigils, all of which could be before either monastic or lay congregations; see M. B. Cunningham, 'Preaching and the Community', in R. Morris (ed.), *Church and People in Byzantium* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1990), 29–47.

[13] As discussed by T. Antonopoulou in 'Rediscovering a Byzantine Preacher: The Case of George the Rhetor', *JÖB* 49 (1999): 161–76 at 166 and Antonopoulou, 'Byzantine Homiletics', 191.

[14] As discussed in e.g. E. Jeffreys (ed.), 'Mimesis in an Ecclesiastical Context: The Case of Iakovos Monachos', in A. Rhoby and E. Schiffer (eds.), *Mimesis–Imitatio–Aemulatio* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 153–65; E. Jeffreys, 'Iakovos Monachos and Spiritual Encyclopedias', in P. Van Deun and C. Macé (eds.), *Encyclopaedic Trends in Byzantium?* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 231–43; E. Jeffreys, 'Tapestries of Quotation: The Challenges of Editing Byzantine Texts', in A. Bucossi and E. Kuhlman (eds.), *Ars edendi Lecture Series*, vol. 2 (Stockholm: Stockhom University: 2012), 33–62.

[15] As discussed by M. Jeffreys, 'Iakovos Monachos, Letter 3', in A. Moffatt (ed.), *Maistor, Studies for Robert Browning* (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1984), 241–57.

for rough edges, though where George of Nikomedia's high-style 'Asianic' rhetoric is juxtaposed with mundane logic-chopping on phrases from the *Protevangelium*, differences in register are more obvious.[16] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the technique of textual interweaving is less developed in the homilies than in the letters, and that long passages of his sources have probably not been traced because they have not survived, have not been published at all or have not been included in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. This situation makes the edition of the text of the homilies very difficult. Some of the text may be analysed in comparison with its sources and some may not, leaving serious editorial unevenness. It is hard to decide how much of the untraced material may be ascribed to Iakovos himself, and how far one should see an emerging authorial persona reflected in such phrases.

While discussion of the homilies has, of course, always taken into account the text that is adorned by the manuscripts' spectacular images, it is interpretation of the images and their place in the Byzantine painterly tradition that has attracted most scholarly attention. Recent work has emphasised the extent to which close reading of the images can reveal trains of thought that, arguably, are intended to supplement the text. Cecily Hennessy, for example, discusses the implications of the recurrent appearance of a young boy in the company of Mary;[17] Jeffrey Anderson, Maria Evangelatou and Kallirrhoe Linardou have analysed images of Mary holding a book,[18] while Maria Evangelatou has produced perhaps the most far-reaching and subtle explorations in her work on the images of Mary spinning purple thread.[19]

[16] It is perhaps worth noting that other of Eirene's acts of patronage produced some unexpected results: e.g. Manasses' verse history with its strongly anecdotal approach to the past, and the decorated presentation copy of Theodore Prodromos' Greek grammar dedicated to Eirene; see Jeffreys, 'Eirene as Patron', 180–4.

[17] C. Hennessy, 'The Stepmum and the Servant: The Stepson and the Sacred Vessel', in A. Eastmond and L. James (eds.), *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 79–98.

[18] J. C. Anderson, 'Anna Komnene, Learned Women and the Book in Byzantine Art', in T. Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene and her Times* (New York: Garland, 2000), 125–56; M. Evangelatou, 'Pursuing Salvation through a Body of Parchment: Books and their Significance in the Illustrated Homilies of Iakovos of Kokkinobaphos', *MS* 68 (2006): 239–84; K. Linardou, 'Mary and her Books in the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts: Female Literacy or Visual Strategies of Narration?', *DChAE* 29 (2008): 35–48.

[19] M. Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power: Clothing Symbolism, Human Salvation and Female Identity in the Illustrated Homilies by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos', *DOP* 69 (2014): 241–324; M. Evangelatou, 'The Purple Thread of the Flesh: The Theological Connotations of a Narrative Iconographic Element in Byzantine Images of the Annunciation', in A. Eastmond and E. James (eds.), *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 261–79. For a survey of this recent work, see K. Linardou, 'The Homilies of Iakovos of the Kokkinobaphou Monastery', in V. Tsamakda (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantine Illustrated Manuscripts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 382–92. In the background to all modern work are the doctorates of J. C. Anderson, 'An Examination of Two

This chapter wishes to draw attention to some of the textual issues that are thrown up by these homilies. It will indicate first the sorts of problems that arise from Iakovos' use of patristic 'snippets' in constructing a passage, next discuss the nature of Homily 4 and finally attempt to suggest an environment in which the homilies could have been used.[20]

Homily 4: Frontispiece and its Interpretation

A prominent feature in the homilies' illustrations is the use of a frontispiece to introduce each homily.[21] Apart from the opening frontispiece which features the Mother of God witnessing Christ's ascension with a five-dome church as a backdrop, the remaining five present typological images of the Mother of God that relate to the homily that follows: in both manuscripts the layout ensures that each frontispiece appears immediately before the beginning of the homily, facing the opening paragraphs.[22]

Homily 4, which remains unpublished, announces – in a series of quotations from the *Protevangelium* – that its subject matter is 'on, *When she became twelve years old*, and on, *The debate of the priests concerning the departure of the supremely holy Virgin from the Temple*, and on, *The heralds went out through all Judea*, and on, *The controversy over Joseph and the removal of the supremely holy Theotokos to the house of Joseph* and *Concerning the fabrication of the veil*'. In essence, the homily's focus is Mary's role in the incarnation, her attitudes and emotions, and the symbolism of the Temple that is her body. The frontispiece used for this homily depicts the Couch of Solomon, a typology which has attracted some scholarly attention because of its unusual subject

Twelfth-Century Centers of Byzantine Manuscript Production' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Princeton University, 1975), and I. Hutter, 'Die Homilien des Mönches Jakobos und ihre Illustrationen' (unpubl. PhD thesis, Vienna University, 1970).

[20] Some of these issues are also discussed in Jeffreys, 'Mimesis', 'Tapestries' and 'Spiritual Encyclopedias' (as in n. 14 above); the argument of the last section is presented more fully in E. Jeffreys, *A Princess, Two Books and an Icon: A Twelfth-Century Puzzle?* (Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Förderung Byzantinischer Studien, Sonderheft 2015).

[21] For recent studies on the purposes of these frontispieces, see K. Linardou, 'Depicting Salvation: Typological Images of Mary in the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts', in Brubaker and Cunningham, *Cult of the Mother of God*, 133–49 and Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', 272–6.

[22] Note that the placing, sequence and content of the images in V and P are virtually identical, despite their differences in size, V being approximately twice the size of P. For analyses of the two major discrepancies, see Anderson, 'Illustrated Sermons', 79–85; K. Linardou, 'The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited: The Internal Evidence of the Books', *Scriptorium* 56 (2007): 384–407; and Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', 301–2 and passim.

matter.[23] Unlike the other five frontispieces, but presumably in acknowledgement of the rarity of the typology, its caption is accompanied by an ἑρμηνεία, 'interpretation', which the reader is instructed to find on the reverse of the image: 'The couch of Solomon around which sixty mighty armed men stand guard. Look for the interpretation behind this page.'[24]

The image depicts a couch covered with a sumptuous fabric on which reclines a haloed male figure flanked by three men clad in cuirasses and supported by serried ranks of spear-carrying soldiers, their heads rising up on the far side of the couch. (See Figure 13.1.)

A translation of the interpretation follows; the Greek text which, as promised, appears behind the folio containing the image, can be found in the Appendix to this chapter and is taken from the edition that is in preparation:[25]

> **The couch has depicted first the all holy Theotokos, but then the soul of each individual amongst the saved. Wherefore Wisdom said**, *Behold the couch of Solomon; sixty mighty men from the mighty of Israel encircle her, all wielding a sword, prepared for war.* That therefore the discourse concerning the couch does not come from history [5] would become completely plain through what is narrated in physical terms concerning Solomon, about whose palaces and table and everything about residence in his kingdom

[23] S. Der Nersessian, 'Le lit de Salomon', *Sbornik Radova* 8 (1963), 77–82; K. Linardou, 'The Couch of Solomon, a Monk, a Byzantine Lady, and the Song of Songs', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church and Mary*, Studies in Church History 39 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 73–85; Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', 289–91. Iakovos also refers to the Couch of Solomon in homily 3 in a list of epithets for the Virgin as she enters the Temple: 'Receive the glorious throne, the royal carriage in which the Word is conveyed when taking on flesh. Embrace the couch of Solomon which the sixty powerful guards encircle' (PG 127, 609C: δέξαι … τὸν θρόνον τὸν ἔνδοξον, τὸ βασιλικὸν ὄχημα, ἐν ᾧ ὁ Λόγος ὀχούμενος, μετὰ σαρκὸς ἐπεδήμησε· περίλαβε τὴν Σολομώντειον κλίνην ἡ κύκλῳ δορυφοροῦσιν οἱ ἐξήκοντα δυνατοί; this is taken from George of Nikomedia, Homily 6 (PG 100, 1425A)). The accompanying illustration shows Mary in procession surrounded by a throng of spear-carrying warriors with two men in cuirasses and holding bared swords immediately behind her; she is preceded by a cluster of men in tunics and cloaks and at the rear of the procession is a group headed by Joachim and Anna, her parents. The caption in the top margin reads: 'Couch surrounded by sixty, to be understood as the soul' (V64r, P86v Κλίνην ὑπὸ ἐξήκοντα κυκλουμένην, τὴν ψυχὴν νοητέον).

[24] V82v, P109v (Mandragore 85): Ἡ κλίνη τοῦ Σολομῶντος, ἣ κύκλῳ δορυφοροῦσιν ἑξήκοντα δυνατοί. Ζήτει τὴν ἑρμηνείαν ὄπιθεν τοῦ φύλλου in top margin above image.

[25] The edition is based on P and V, the two twelfth-century witnesses. In this passage there are no variants in their readings; textual differences between the two manuscripts are in fact rare. The manuscript tradition includes one late fourteenth-century manuscript (BAV, Barb. gr. 583) which covers homily 2 only, and a number of more complete nineteenth-century manuscripts in monasteries in Greece which are arguably apographs of Ballerini, *Sylloge monumentorum*. Words in **bold** are not present in the sources, words in **bold with underlining** are phrases whose sense can be observed in the source passage, but where the wording is not followed precisely. *Italics* are used for the two biblical quotations, which are also in the source text.

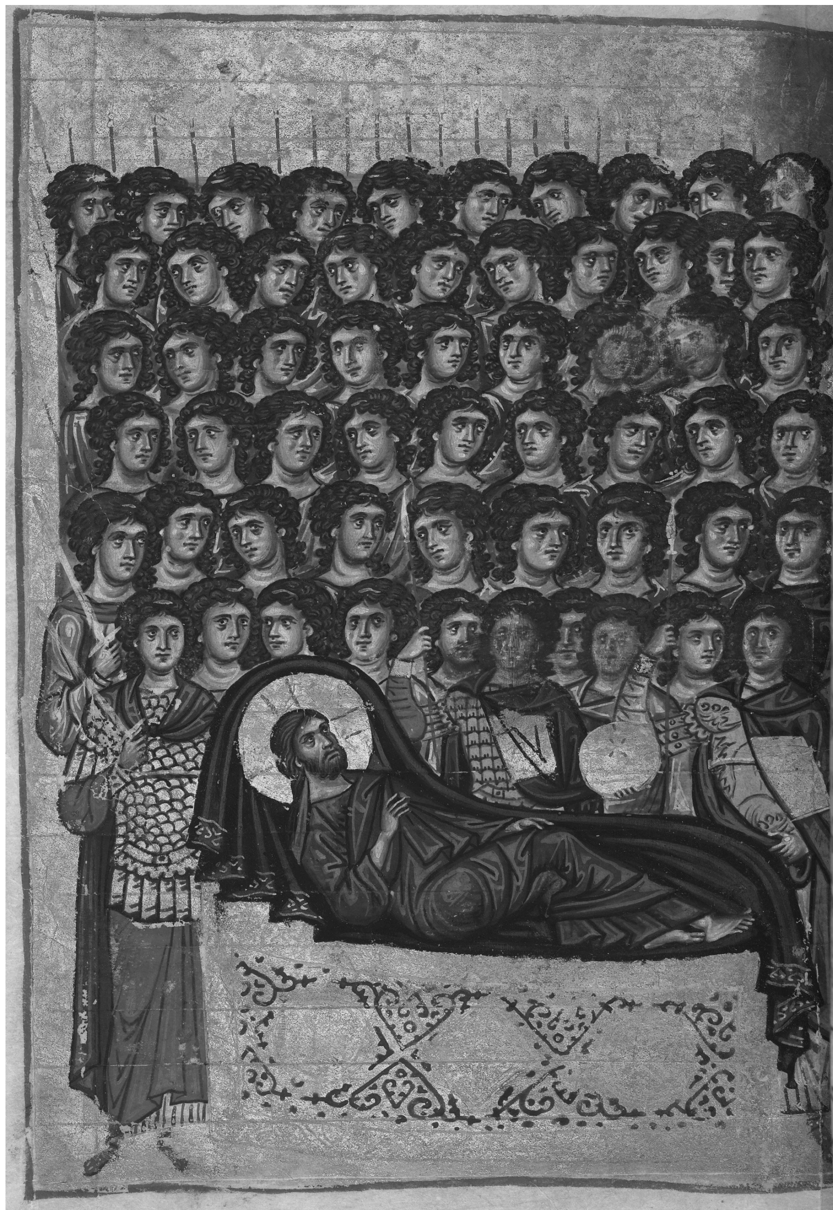

Figure 13.1 Couch of Solomon, Paris. Gr. 1208, fol. 109v, eleventh century (photo: Bibliothèque nationale, Paris).

the discourse has described with great precision; but it has said nothing new or extraordinary with reference to the couch. **Thus it is clear that** another Solomon is signified by this, who also became flesh from the seed of David, [10] he whose name is Peace, the true king of Israel. For

> his sake one king's couch represents everything that is saved; the cohort of the saved is summed up fittingly by the number of the sixty. Indeed it is necessary that the five **senses** become the fearsome weapon-wielding guards of the king's couch. **Because the number of the sixty indicates the invincible aspect of the soul, since in total five multiplied by twelve [15] completes the number sixty.** They strike terror and astonishment into murky cogitations which are made by night and in darkness pierce and shoot the well-disposed in the heart. The sword of the eye constantly looks to the Lord and maintains a steady gaze and is not corrupted by any foul spectacle; likewise reception of divine dogma is a weapon of hearing that never accepts foolish [20] teaching through it. In this way taste and touch and the sense of smell can be girded on as appropriate weapons that arm each of the senses **as a soldier**, through which terror and amazement come upon the murky enemies whose moment to make attacks on souls is night and the darkness **of passions**. Therefore all those who gird on the divine panoply surround the king's one couch, [25] as one cohort and one army and one couch, that is, one church and one people and one bride, all will come under one commander and priest and bridegroom, joined together in the harmony of one body. How blessed to be a warrior amongst those who guard in tranquillity and purity the king's couch, that is, his own heart, so that the king rests not on a throne but on a bed.

Virtually every element of the phrases that make up this passage is taken from disparate areas of Gregory of Nyssa's homilies on the Song of Songs, as can be seen from the Source listing in the Appendix. Their wording has not been altered drastically by Iakovos although there are some infelicitous divergences in lines 15 and 16 as discussed in the textual comments in the Appendix, while in line 19 the passage's syntax can be more easily understood by reference back to its wider context in the source. The opening sentence, with a redundant μὲν in line 1, and the illustration's caption, with the form ὅπιθεν, both diverge from standard high-level Greek; both are arguably Iakovos' own composition, supporting the suggestion made in the edition of his letters that his cento-like method of composition was due to lack of confidence in his own skills in composition.[26] Nevertheless, it should be noted that the process of plucking short snippets from widely scattered pages in three of Nyssa's homilies implies that Iakovos had no problem in comprehending his sources' content and rationale, and could manipulate them in a meaningful way. His perceived problem lies not in understanding the patristic high style, but in independently reproducing it. This also raises questions of how Iakovos controlled his material, for which there are no

[26] Jeffreys and Jeffreys, *Epistulae*, pp. xli–xlii.

easy answers.[27] Iakovos' most vigorous intervention in Gregory's original wording occurs in lines 13–16 when he succinctly introduces the symbolic equation of human senses with the mighty armed men of Israel.

The import of the image and Iakovos' interpretation of it is expressed in the opening lines of the 'interpretation': the couch symbolises the Theotokos, who bears Christ as he reclines upon her, but – through her – it also symbolises every individual's soul (lines 1–2). The thought is supported by a quotation from the Songs of Songs (lines 2–4: *Behold the couch of Solomon; sixty mighty men from the mighty of Israel encircle her, all wielding a sword, prepared for war*, Cant 3:7–8). But, continues the interpretation, the Solomon referred to cannot be the king of Israel since 'the history' (1 Kgs 7:38–50) gives details of the furnishing of Solomon's palace but does not mention his couch (lines 4 and 8). So the king must be another king, a spiritual king, 'whose name is peace' (line 10). By implication, this is Christ, the male, haloed figure lying on the couch. Thus, the 'interpretation' goes on, the couch that bears him must be the Theotokos who by bearing the spiritual king has enabled salvation to reach mankind (lines 10–11). The sixty armed men represent the five senses which are armed to guarantee the purity of the individual soul (lines 11–14: five times twelve make sixty). The armed senses prevent the soul's corruption by false thoughts, especially those that arise by night (lines 14–16). So, concludes the 'interpretation', those who duly arm their hearts, that is, keep watchful guard around the king's couch, live harmoniously in a united church.

In a recent article Maria Evangelatou is right in saying that, while the cento-like nature of Iakovos' writing must be acknowledged,[28] nevertheless his texts have to be read as independent documents which convey meaning independently of their original contexts. However, caution is always needed. There are two instances in this passage which demonstrate the issues that can arise. Evangelatou, for example, suggests that Iakovos' placing of εἰρήνη (line 10) gives it particular prominence through an unusual use of apposition (ᾧ τὸ ὄνομα εἰρήνη),[29] allowing this phrase to be read as an allusion to the work's putative sponsor, the sevastokratorissa Eirene. In fact the syntax is not unusual, and the wording is exactly as it is in the source where the reference is to Christ. However, while a resonance with the sevastokratorissa's name may be present,[30]

[27] There is some speculation on this in Jeffreys, 'Spiritual Encyclopaedias', 236–9.

[28] Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', 289–91.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Cf. Jeffreys and Jeffreys, *Epistulae*, p. xxv, with reference to letters 8.13 and 11.16.

Iakovos will not be making a simple correspondence between Eirene and Christ.[31]

A further case concerns the enigmatic statement in lines 13 to 15: 'the number of the sixty indicates the invincible aspect of the soul, since in total five multiplied by twelve completes the number sixty'. This can in part be explained as a garbled use of Gregory's phrases (at *In Cant.* 6.195.8–10, as cited in the Source list in the Appendix) but is completely explained by later sentences in Gregory's text,[32] which Iakovos does not cite – an equation is made between the saved and the people of Israel. The twelve tribes of Israel are represented by one warrior from each tribe who is then divided by the five senses, thus producing a total of 60. To fully understand Iakovos' 'five multiplied by twelve' the reader needs to be aware of the context from which the phrase is taken and the relevance of this symbolism to the mystical thought of Gregory as he describes the process by which the soul and its spiritual senses progress to union with the divinity.[33] This may have implications about the homilies' intended recipient or recipients for it is noteworthy that Gregory's homilies on the Song of Songs are the patristic source most frequently pillaged by Iakovos in his letters to Eirene, where the extracts are used to inspire Eirene to higher stages of spiritual contemplation.[34]

Despite the textual infelicities pointed out in the Appendix, which highlight the need for readers of Iakovos' homilies to be on the alert for problems of interpretation on a small scale caused by his jagged stitching, the frontispiece and its 'interpretation' provide a thoughtful preface to the disparate jumble of events that are narrated in the homily itself: it focuses attention on the absent presence of the Mother of God, who is present in the image though not in the form in which she is usually perceived. The messages are that the image should be contemplated with care, with senses that are sharpened for watchful faithfulness in order to be in harmony with

[31] For some of the complexities that arise as Iakovos manipulates his sources see M. Jeffreys, 'Letter 3'.

[32] Gregory of Nyssa, *In Cant.* 6.197.6–9: εἰ γὰρ πάντες ὄψονται τὸν θεὸν οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ γενόμενοι, οἱ δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἰδόντες Ἰσραὴλ κυρίως γίνονταί τε καὶ ὀνομάζονται, δώδεκα δὲ διαιρεῖται φυλαῖς κατά τινα λόγον ἀπόρρητον τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα (If the pure in heart will see God, they are rightly called Israel; this name is ineffably divided among the twelve tribes); and *In Cant.* 6.197.11–13 ἑνὸς μὲν ἀφ' ἑκάστου μέρους λαμβανομένου, εἰς πέντε δὲ ὁπλίτας κατὰ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν αἰσθήσεων τοῦ ἑνὸς τούτου μεριζομένου (One warrior taken from each of the twelve is divided into five according to the number of the senses).

[33] The 'senses of the spirit' (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς αἰσθητήρια) of Gregory, *In Cant.* 4.117.1–2.

[34] Jeffreys and Jeffreys, *Epistulae*, pp. xxxviii–xl.

the right teaching of the church. This is very much the tenor of Iakovos' letters to Eirene.[35]

Homily 4: Summary and Analysis

Homily 4, to which the 'interpretation' on the Couch of Solomon is an introduction and guide, differs from Iakovos' other five homilies in giving more space to narrative and comment than to encomiastic lyricism, but like them it juxtaposes passages in contrasting styles, which arguably indicate source-switching, and like them includes source-switching phrases such as 'but that is enough on this topic'. However, none of this homily's sources has yet been traced.[36] In fact, the humdrum nature of much of the homily's contents tempts the reader to think that Iakovos may here be relying on his own efforts.

Homily 4 is unpublished. A summary follows, which also indicates where images are placed in the text.

Homily 3 had ended with Mary ensconced in the Temple, being fed by an angel, with the homilist, Iakovos, concerned that she had lacked appropriate care from a female attendant.

Homily 4 opens [V83^{r}, P110^{r}; lines 1–35[37]] with a densely expressed passage on humankind's inability to take proper care of precious gifts, in this case, the pearl that is Mary. [P112^{v}, V84^{v}; lines 36–75] A council of priests debated what should be done with Mary who, having lived in the Temple since the age of three, was now aged twelve. *IMAGE 1[38] Zachariah was reluctant to take her from the Temple for who would be worthy to care for her? But only he was aware of the dispensation to which she was central. [P115^{v}, V86^{v}; lines 76–100] The priests, not fully comprehending Mary's exceptional qualities, continued their debate, and Zachariah was asked to pray for a solution as he performed the rituals. [P117^{r}, V87^{v}; lines 101–49] *IMAGE 2[39]

35 Ibid.

36 Unlike homily 1, which is completely drawn from George of Nikomedia; Jeffreys, 'Tapestries', 50–4.

37 The line numbers here and in the captions quoted below refer to the draft edition. The image numbers used here are purely for convenience of reference in this chapter. The Mandragore number identifies this image in the files for P in the BnF portal for digitised manuscripts; since V has been digitised as a whole by BAV the images can be found without difficulty (for the URLs for both see my n. 3). With very few exceptions, the captions are placed in the top margin in both P and V.

38 Image 1. P113^{v}, V5^{v} (line 48): Zachariah's concern for the virgin (φροντὶς Ζαχαρίου περὶ τῆς παρθένου) (Mandragore 88).

39 Image 2. P117^{r}, V87^{v} (line 102): The priests' objections to Zachariah (πρὸς Ζαχαρίαν ἀντίθεσις τῶν ἱερέων) (Mandragore 90).

The priests argued that Mary could not be returned to her parents, citing parallels, such as prohibitions on the removal of dedicated ritual vessels. Responsibility was attributed to Zachariah for having allowed her into the Temple without explaining his reasons, so it was he who would have to supplicate for a solution. [P119^{v}, V89^{v}; lines 150–92] Zachariah entered the Holy of Holies in his priestly robes and *IMAGE 3[40] addressed God, asking for a solution, acknowledging Mary's special status. An angel told him to summon all the widowers of Israel, who should each take a staff; the one to whom a sign was given should take Mary as his wife. [P122^{v}, V91^{v}; lines 193–237] The events concerning Mary had been planned ineffably and so were not vulnerable to attack from the evil one, *IMAGE 4[41] nor was she herself susceptible to his wiles. Iakovos [using the first person but not naming himself] mocks the evil one's inability to corrupt Mary. It was to avoid the attentions of the devil that God produced the widowers to take over her protection. *IMAGE 5[42] [P125^{v}, V93^{v}; lines 238–301] Heralds summoned the widowers, according to the story; Joseph came too, *IMAGE 6[43] hurriedly thrusting his adze into the ground. Seven widowers were selected, of Davidic descent according to Athanasius: this is not really a contradiction of 'the story' which says that many gathered together. Their rods were placed in the sanctuary. It is not a problem that Joseph came from Nazareth in Galilee, which is distant from Judaea, for he heard the Lord's trumpet. [P139^{r}, V96^{v}; lines 302–29] Zachariah brought the rods out and returned them to their owners. Joseph's was returned last: *IMAGE 7[44] Reasons are given why this should be. A dove flew up from Joseph's rod. This was unexpected as it was assumed the sign would be that a rod sprouted (as had Aaron's in the past). [P132^{r}, V98^{r}; lines 330–45] This took place outside the Temple as the true Temple, the Virgin, had no need of the old, symbolic Temple. [P133^{r}, V98^{v}; lines 346–71] Joseph was astounded at his selection: he was poor, elderly and had adult children while the girl was young and of high status. [P134^{v}, V99^{v}; lines 372–89] The priest reassured Joseph, *IMAGE 8[45] but Joseph's modesty is admirable. [P135^{v}, V100^{v}; lines 390–434] Note the careful used of the term 'betrothal': Mary's extraordinary role could not allow her to be sullied by normal laws of nature and society, that is, the marriage bond to a husband. [P138^{v}, V102^{v}; lines 434–66] But what of Joseph? Was

[40] Image 3. P120^{r}, V90^{r} (line 154): Zachariah's prayer for a revelation of what should be done (εὐχὴ Ζαχαρίου δι᾽ ἀποκάλυψιν τοῦ ποιητέου) (Mandragore 92).

[41] Image 4. P123^{r}, V92^{r} (line 201): How the holy Virgin was preserved unharmed from the arrows of the evil one by an unseen force (Ὅπως ἀοράτῳ δυνάμει συνετηρεῖτο ἡ ἁγία Παρθένος ἀβλαβὴς τῶν τοῦ πονηροῦ βέλων) (Mandragore 94).

[42] Image 5. P125^{v}, V93^{v} (line 237): The oracular response given to Zachariah (χρησμὸς τῷ Ζαχαρίᾳ δοθεὶς) (Mandragore 96).

[43] Image 6. P127^{r}, V94^{v} (line 255): The trumpet summons for the widowers to gather (διὰ σαλπίγγων διαλαλίας πρὸς ἀθροισμὸν τῶν χηρευόντων) (Mandragore 99).

[44] Image 7. P131^{v}, V97^{v} (line 324): Zachariah returns their own rods to the chosen ones (ὁ Ζαχαρίας ἀντιδιδοὺς τοῖς ἐπελεγεῖσι τὰς οἰκείας ῥάβδους) (Mandragore 104).

[45] Image 8. P125^{r}, V100^{r} (line 380): The handing over of the Virgin to Joseph and his objections made to Zachariah (ἀπόδοσις τῆς παρθένου πρὸς Ἰωσὴφ καὶ ἀντίθεσις αὐτοῦ πρὸς Ζαχαρίαν) (Mandragore 107).

he not appalled at the proposal that the girl offered to God should become his wife? [P139^{v}, V103^{v}; lines 467–89] The evangelist used the term betrothal to introduce a difficult topic that would have been rejected by many, Jews included. Joseph is to be seen as Mary's guardian. [P141^{v}, V104^{v}; lines 490–518] *IMAGE 9[46] So Joseph willingly took charge of the girl and brought her to his small, shabby house. *IMAGE 10[47] Despite her previous sheltered life the girl did not flinch at her new surroundings. [P143^{v}, V106^{v}; lines 519–52] How admirable is her reaction! Why did she not complain? How excellent are her qualities! [P145^{v}, V107^{v}; lines 553–71] Joseph rejoiced to see her in his house, set her to her household tasks and returned to his work, *IMAGE 11[48] telling her he trusted in her virtuous good senses. [P147^{r}, V108^{v}; lines 572–83] The priests decided that a new curtain should be woven for the Temple, the work to be done by pure girls of the tribe of David. When suitable girls were collected Mary surpassed them all in purity. She was allotted the purple wool to weave. *IMAGE 12[49] [584–96] This signified her status as the queen of creation since God's robe of flesh would be woven from her. [597–602] So, Lady, we offer you our dutiful thanks since through you we have received ineffable benefits.

Homily 4 is about 6,000 words long; one could envisage it being presented orally in about an hour and a half. It is made up of narrative, comments of several kinds and some elements of encomium, with twelve images inserted at irregular intervals.[50] If one wished to categorise it, it could perhaps be best defined as exegetical, though expounding the apocryphal *Protevangelium of James* rather than a biblical text.[51]

The narrative is based on sections 17–22 of the *Protevangelium*. The *Protevangelium* is a spare text, expressed succinctly. In the course of the homily much of it is quoted, or paraphrased, in order to frame the preacher's exposition. All episodes in this section of the *Protevangelium* are covered – the priests' perplexity on Mary reaching the age of twelve (*Prot*. 17), Zachariah's prayer for a solution, the summoning of the widowers for selection as her husband (*Prot*. 18), the placing of the rods in the tabernacle, Joseph's being the last to be returned with the dove emerging from

46 Image 9. P142^{r}, V105^{r} (line 495): The departure of the Virgin from the Temple and her removal to the house of Joseph (Τῆς παρθένου παράληψις ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ ἀπαγωγὴ εἰς τὸν οἶκον Ἰωσήφ) (Mandragore 109).

47 Image 10. P142^{v}, V105^{v} (line 502): The establishment of the Virgin in the house of her betrothed (Ἀποκατάστασις τῆς παρθένου εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ μνηστῆρος) (Mandragore 113).

48 Image 11. P146^{r}, V108^{r} (line 560): Joseph's speech to the Virgin as he departed (ἡ πρὸς τὴν παρθένον ὁμιλία Ἰωσὴφ ὑποχωροῦντος) (Mandragore 115).

49 Image 12. P147^{v}, V109^{r} (line 584): The handing over of the purple wool from the Temple to the Virgin (Ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ πρὸς τὴν παρθένον παράδοσις τῆς πορφύρας) (Mandragore 117).

50 Note that although V is twice the size of P the images are positioned at the same point in the text in each manuscript.

51 On definitions and categories, see Cunningham, 'Homilies', 875–8.

it, Joseph's reluctance (*Prot*. 19), his establishment of Mary in his house, his return to his labours (*Prot*. 20) and the priests' distribution of wool for the Temple curtain with Mary receiving the purple skeins (*Prot*. 21–2). One passage of preacherly comment (P122v, V91v; lines 193–232) that interrupts the narrative sequence and might be classed as an additional episode deals with 'the ruler of darkness' who is prevented by the divine dispensation from noticing and attacking Mary.

Interspersed in the narrative, as indicated in the summary, are twelve images, usually occupying half a page in each manuscript with text above and below the image (and a historiated initial as the text resumes), and a caption in the upper margin. All but two (Images 4 and 6) illustrate discrete episodes focused on the person of Mary, showing her interaction with the priests, Zachariah and Joseph: the figures are set against architectural backgrounds with towers and porticoes linked by high walls. Of the two exceptions one involves the summoning of the widowers and shows lively trumpeters rushing round the countryside under the watchful gaze of Zachariah (Image 6). The other (Image 4) shows Mary guarded by angels and armed men against the wiles of the evil one: the armed men are a visual reference back to the armed men of the frontispiece, just as there is a phrase later on (in line 572 [P147r, V108v]: τῶν ἀρετῶν τῷ κύκλῳ δορυφορουμένῃ) which refers back to the interpretation of the frontispiece. Of the images inserted in this homily Image 4 is the one that would seem most conducive to meditation by its readers, although there is no instruction to that effect. Image 8 is followed by a comment 'See' (line 381 [P135r, V100r]: Ὅρα); this occurs in the context of Joseph's modest reluctance to act as Mary's guardian and is as likely to be a verbal device as an instruction to visual inspection.[52]

The narrative that Iakovos has taken from the *Protevangelium* is bulked out in several ways. Speeches are put into the mouths of the participants: Zachariah (P113r, V85v, lines 46–75: puzzlement on how to deal with Mary; P120r, V90r, lines 155–88: plea to God for a solution), the priests (P119r, V89r, lines 135–49: handing the problem of Mary over to Zachariah), Joseph (P134r, V99r, lines 359–70: a hypothetical speech of objections Joseph might have raised; P146r, V108r, lines 560–9: Joseph's admonition to Mary as he left for his work), Mary (P143r, V106v, lines 519–40: a hypothetical speech on when she first saw Joseph's shabby house); or

[52] A clear instruction to the reader to pay attention to an illustration occurs in homily 5 (PG 127, col. 641B; note that in PG homily 5 has been numbered homily 4).

the preacher imagines the gibes with which he could mock the evil one (P123^{v}, V92^{v}, lines 206–32).

There are passages of exposition, where the preacher discusses the reasons behind the participants' actions: why Zachariah watched over Mary (P115^{v}, V86^{v}, lines 81–101: because of God's plan), why Zachariah rejected the priests' proposal that Mary be returned to her parents (P117^{r}, V87^{v}, lines 103–17: because ritual offerings cannot be handed back), why Joseph reacted as he did to the summons to the widowers (P125^{v}, V93^{v}, lines 240–68: the herald encouraged him), why it was a surprise when a dove flew up from the rods (P132^{v}, V98^{r}, lines 330–45: because previously such rods, like Aaron's, sprouted leaves), why Joseph was bewildered (P132^{r}, V98^{v}, lines 349–59: he was old and poor), why the preacher approved of Joseph's modesty (P135^{r}, V100^{r}, lines 381–9: he showed good character), why the term 'betrothal' was used rather than 'marriage' (P135^{v}, V100^{v}, lines 390–434; P140^{v}, V103^{v}, lines 468–89: because of legal issues), why Zachariah and Joseph reacted as they did to the solution to the dilemma over Mary (P138^{v}, V102^{v}, lines 434–66). The explanations are prosaic and down to earth.

Similarly prosaic are answers which the preacher offers to questions that his audience might potentially put to him: God did not use Mary's parents as her guardians because he did not want the evil one to know what was happening (P125^{r}, V93^{v}, lines 232–4); if someone were to wonder how Joseph came to be involved when Nazareth and Galilee are far apart it is because the Lord saw to it that he was informed (P129^{v}, V96^{r}, lines 288–301); Joseph's rod was returned last so that it should be clear that all others had been rejected (P129^{v}, V96^{v}, lines 309–23). These are reminiscent of the sort of pragmatic issues put, for example, to Photios in the questions and answers in his *Amphilochia*.[53]

Iakovos also offers some elements of source criticism, such as the comment on the dove (at P132^{v}, V98^{r}, lines 330–45, mentioned above) where the dove of the *Protevangelium* is contrasted with the sprouting rods of the Old Testament (Num 17:8). More strikingly, Iakovos discusses how the 'many' widowers of the 'story' (i.e. *Prot.* 18) can be reconciled with the seven that 'Athanasius' reports had been selected (P128^{r}, V95^{r}, line 270). Athanasius is presumably the prolific, tempestuous and saintly bishop of Alexandria (d. 373), though this passage remains to be identified in his numerous writings.

[53] As discussed in A. Louth, 'Photios as a Theologian', in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 206–23.

As noted above the encomiastic elements which are so prominent in other of the homilies play a lesser role in Homily 4, where the only encomiastic moments come in the closing paragraphs. There is a sober encomium of Mary when the girl who was accustomed to luxury did not flinch at the poverty she encountered in Joseph's hovel (P143ʳ, V106ʳ, lines 506–18). This is immediately followed (P143ᵛ, V106ᵛ, lines 519–52) by a lyrical account of the beauties of Mary's character and graces, including a hypothetical speech that reveals yet more of her grace: passages of this sort in Iakovos' preceding homilies were derived from George of Nikomedia.[54]

The overall tenor of the homily is that of a rationalising account of a sequence of events that befell an earnestly well-meaning family group. The illustrations, with one exception, are similarly down-beat: the one exception is the image of Mary protected from the evil one's attention. This matter-of-factness is at odds with the dense imagery of the typological frontispiece that requires explication from the 'interpretation'. Nevertheless there are occasional comments in the course of the homily which focus on Mary within this typological framework. Thus, 'they [the priests] hasten the movement from the Temple of the true tabernacle', since Mary was the 'true tabernacle' (P118ᵛ, V88ᵛ, lines 123–4); that Mary is the 'true Temple' is pointed up (P132ʳ, V98ᵛ, lines 330–45); Mary, the 'holy Temple', leaves the Temple (P142ʳ, V105ʳ, line 496–9); it is stated explicitly that Mary's selection to weave the purple curtain for the Temple symbolises her destined role in the incarnation (P147ᵛ, V108ᵛ, lines 585–94). These passages, however, are only a small element in the make-up of the homily and the preacher's audience would need to be alert to pick them up.

Conclusion

This chapter began with suggestions that the Kokkinobaphos Homilies present an idiosyncratic account of the life of the Theotokos but one which cannot be ignored, if only because the magnificent illustrations which accompany the narrative are a major witness to the artistic culture of Komnenian Constantinople. Discussion has focused on the homilies' text rather than on their illustrations in an attempt to show that Iakovos' cento-like process of composition needs to be taken into account when assessing the homilies' purposes. The theology underlying the homilies has been mentioned only in passing, and then largely to suggest that parallels

54 See e.g. the lyrical passages from the opening of homily 1 quoted in Jeffreys, 'Tapestries', 52–3.

exist between Iakovos' spiritual advice in his letters to the sevastokratorissa Eirene and in the homilies which are assumed to be been written by him at her behest. It remains problematic that the homilies do not fit into a regular homily pattern, however defined: they neither cover the whole of Mary's life nor do they all correspond to Marian feasts.[55] It is also puzzling that two virtually identical copies, though in very different sizes, were made within a short space of time, if not simultaneously.[56]

Several responses to these issues have been made in recent years, usually based on divergences in the decorative programme in P and V. P, for example, but not V, includes an authorial frontispiece in which Iakovos is depicted in his monkish habit venerating John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa, the two main authorities on whom he has relied in his writings;[57] the quire structure in V is such that it is clear that no such image was ever present in that manuscript.[58] Kallirroe Linardou uses this to suggest that the image in P is a *ktetor* image rather than an author portrait, and that P was made by Iakovos for his personal use. Interesting though this proposal is, given the expense that would have been involved in copying and decorating P it seems intrinsically unlikely that Iakovos' monastic circumstances would have permitted this luxury. By this scenario, however, P would have been made for use by a man.

Maria Evangelatou, accepting Linardou's points concerning P, wishes to tie V more closely to the sevastokratorissa.[59] She draws attention once more to the differences between P and V in the image in Homily 2 on the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. In V35^{r} Eve is placed in the centre of the image, gesturing to the serpent and thereby emphasising the centrality of her role in the Fall, while at P47^{r} the image reflects the sequence of events in the Genesis story; both Adam and Eve occupy the central spot, without the serpent. Evangelatou suggests that 'the Vatican miniature of the fall starkly highlights Eve's culpability and Adam's moral superiority' and can (paradoxically) have an empowering message for a female reader 'that Eve's fall led to Mary's exaltation' and 'Motherhood became the gateway to salvation, through which the glory of being united with divinity in the

[55] Note that they do not enter into the later homiletic tradition, and are excluded by Ehrhard from his lists; see A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts,* 3 vols. (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1936–52), vol. 3, 523.

[56] The sequence of construction is a recurrent theme in the scholarly literature: Anderson, 'Illustrated Sermons', 76–85; Linardou, 'Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited', 385–7, 407.

[57] P1^{v} (Mandragore 1); the image is thoroughly discussed in Anderson, 'Illustrated Sermons', 70–6.

[58] Linardou, 'Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited', 389–90.

[59] Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', 301–3.

person of Christ was bestowed on human nature'.[60] In both P and V the misogyny of the homily text is transformed fifty lines later, at the end of Adam's speech, by the preacher's jubilant proclamation of the birth of Mary: 'The groans have fallen silent and the doxology of thanksgiving has made its appearance. Exultation has arrived, joy has shone forth. For the pledges had been set out and the unwed bride has been selected; the palace has been led out and today has been prepared.'[61] Evangelatou argues that the visual highlighting of the role of Eve in the Fall of the human race so enhances the achievements of Mary in humanity's Redemption, as expressed verbally in the latter part of the homily, that the intended recipient of V must have been a woman, who could be none other than the sevastokratorissa Eirene.[62]

That Eirene was an active patron of texts, many of them secular, and objects in the decade of the 1140s is undoubted.[63] That she was also deeply devoted to the Mother of God is witnessed through the votive offerings made by her in several of the Constantinopolitan churches dedicated to the Theotokos.[64] Since a number of these were made to further the well-being of members of her family Maria Evangelatou uses them as a strong argument for Eirene as a caring mother whose maternal preoccupations led her to an especial devotion for the Mother of God, and an especial sensitivity to a woman's place in the theology of the time – and hence an interest in the homilies written by her spiritual father. This, however, is only part of the story. Eirene's decade of widowhood was tempestuous, as can be seen in iambic poems produced in her persona by her household poet, Manganeios Prodromos.[65] These impassioned tales of imprisonment,

[60] Ibid., 303. Evangelatou sees significance in the positioning of this image in the manuscripts; in P47r it is placed at the opening of Adam's speech of misogynistic reproach, while at V35r it comes two lines and two sentences into that speech. The first two sentences express Adam's regret at his expulsion, the third and fourth are directed at the serpent's deceitful counsel; reproach to Eve comes in the next sentence. It is, however, arguable that the determining factor in the positioning of this image has been page size.

[61] PG 127, 584A. The scene is accompanied by a delightful image of the infant Mary tucked up in a luxurious cot (P52r, V38v (Mandragore 44)).

[62] The logic of this argument is not straightforward, but what cannot be in dispute is that Eve is central to the image on V35r. We should be aware that the only vocative noted so far in the homilies that is addressed to an individual reader or hearer is in the masculine (at 5.11), and is to be found in both P and V. This is not a conclusive indication of the intended readership. Iakovos in his letters, though putting most of the masculine participles and adjective of his sources into the feminine, did not always remember to do so.

[63] Jeffreys, 'Eirene as Patron', 180–4.

[64] Discussed in Evangelatou, 'Threads of Power', 292–4, 309, n. 238; see also Jeffreys, 'Eirene as Patron', 188–9, and Jeffreys, *Princess, Two Books and an Icon*, 22–4.

[65] Manganeios Prodromos, nos. 67–74, 103, 107; as yet only nos. 72–4 have been edited, in E. Miller, 'Poésies inédites de Theodore Prodrome', *Annuaire de l'association pour l'encouragement*

beatings, loss of wealth and separation from her children were intended to be read out in churches of the Mother of God in the course of a service.[66] All end with Eirene's heart-felt cries of faithful dedication to the Mother of God and pleas for her support. Eirene's grim circumstances would have been an even stronger factor in her devotion than were her maternal concerns for her children's well-being; in some of Manganeios' poems composed on her behalf she comes across as hysterical with outrage at the ill-treatment meted out to her.

These points, which represent only a few of the issues currently under discussion, indicate that there is no simple solution to the complexities thrown up by the Kokkinobaphos Homilies.[67] I would like, however, to end with a suggestion for a set of circumstances which might account for two of the homilies' oddities which have received less attention than they deserve: that not all are festal, and that they present a truncated life of the Mother of God.[68] The circumstances I have in mind would see the homilies as intended for use in conjunction with veneration of an icon. One icon that seems particularly apposite has been mentioned several times in the scholarly literature in connection with the issues around Eirene and the Kokkinobaphos

des études grecques en France 17 (1883), 18–64; see Jeffreys, *Princess, Two Books and an Icon*, 24–6.

[66] They end with instructions to the priest to continue the service. For a discussion of this insertion of verses, usually before a reading, see T. Antonopoulou, 'On the Reception of Homilies and Hagiography in Byzantium: The Recited Metrical Prefaces', in Rhoby and Schiffer (eds.), *Mimesis–Imitatio–Aemulatio,* 57–80, with reference to MP at 63–5; and P. Magdalino, 'The Liturgical Poetics of an Elite Religious Confraternity', in T. Shawcross and I. Toth (eds.), *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 116–32. These verses are particularly interesting given the church's prohibitions on women speaking in church; see canon 44 of the Synod of Laodokeia, G. D. Mansi (ed.), *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence, 1681; repr. Graz, 1961), vol. 2, 571C and canon 70 of the Council in Trullo (Mansi, vol. 11, 973E), and Balsamon's forthright comments on Laodikeia canon 44 at the end of the twelfth century (PG 137, 1356D–1357A); for the church's repressive attitude towards the role of women in ecclesiastical matters, see J. Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 115–32.

[67] An earlier speculative solution has suggested analogies between the homilies' combination of narrative, homiletic pondering and illustration and contemporary novels such as the *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* of Theodore Prodromos; E. Jeffreys, 'A Date for Rhodanthe and Dosikles?', in P. Agapitos and D. Reinsch (eds.), *Der Roman im Byzanz in der Komnenenzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Beerenverlag), 127–36, at 134; on the novels in general see E. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

[68] This proposal has been presented in lectures on several occasions, including the sessions in the Oxford Patristics Conference of 2015 which have provided the material for this present book. The arguments are set out more fully in Jeffreys, *Princess, Two Books and an Icon*, which records a lecture given in Heidelberg in February 2015.

Figure 13.2 Icon of the Virgin Brephokratousa enthroned with saints, twelfth century, St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai (photo: Getty images). For a colour reproduction of this figure, please refer to the plate section.

material:[69] the twelfth-century icon of the Theotokos Brephokratousa now in the monastery of St Catherine in Sinai.[70] (See Figure 13.2.)

Like the homilies this icon is focused on the role of Mary in the redemption of humanity. Its composition demands a contemplative response. Mary is seated centrally while on the icon frame around her are figures of the Pantokrator, apostles, Adam and Eve, Anna and Joachim, and Old Testament patriarchs and prophets all holding scrolls with biblical quotations which explicate 'the procession of the Incarnation of the Word'.[71] As with the homilies the later stages of Mary's life are not shown, although – unlike the

[69] Anderson, 'Anna Komnene', 136–41; T. Papamastorakis, 'No. 28 Icon of the Virgin Brephokratousa', catalogue entry in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Milan: Skira, 2000), 314–16; Linardou, 'Depicting Salvation', 134.

[70] K. Manafis, *Σινᾶ. Οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς Ἱ. Μονῆς Ἁγίας Αἰκατερίνης* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1990), 105 and pl. 19; H. Evans and W. Wixom, *The Glory of Byzantium* (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 1997), no. 244. The icon can now be viewed online as the 'Virgin Glykophilousa enthroned with saints' in the Sinai Icon Collection (http://vrc.princeton.edu/sinai/items/show/7162).

[71] Papamastorakis, 'Virgin Brephokratousa', 314–15. There are transcriptions by Doula Mouriki of the scroll quotations in Manafis, *Σινᾶ*, 105.

homilies – the Christ Child is centre stage on her lap; however the message of this icon, like that of the homilies, is that it is through Mary that Christ's humanity was made possible.

Devotion to an icon like this, fostered by Iakovos, could have been practised by Eirene alone or by a pious guild of worshippers, either in Eirene's chapel in her palace[72] or in a city church. Religious confraternities were not unknown in Byzantium, though the evidence is scattered;[73] they would seem to have been open to lay people as well as priests and included both men and women. Their objectives were charitable and religious, with amongst the most usual being to provide a seemly Christian burial for the dead,[74] to maintain a public bath[75] or to venerate an icon or holy person: it is the last category that is relevant here. The best known instance concerns the Hodegetria icon whose Tuesday processions and ritually clad devotees are well known from twelfth-century texts and later pilgrim observations as well as being attested in a fresco and icons.[76] It is not impossible to envisage a scenario in which Iakovos developed his sermons in conjunction with one such group, whereupon Eirene had two lavish copies of her spiritual father's work created – a large one for the confraternity's use and a small one for herself (thus providing a solution for yet another of the homilies' oddities). However, it must be recognised that, tempting though this scenario may be, it is speculative and much else still requires explanation.

Like the woman who it is now agreed sponsored them, the Kokkinobaphos Homilies remain enigmatic and will be so until, and probably long after, their text is fully available.

[72] Manganeios Prodromos, no. 72, refers to Eirene's chapel.

[73] Classic studies include J. Nesbitt and J. Wiitta, 'A Confraternity of the Comnenian Era', *BZ* 68 (1975): 360–84, P. Horden, 'The Confraternities of Byzantium', in W. J. Shiels and D. Wood (eds.), *Voluntary Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 25–45; G. Dagron, '"Ainsi rien n'échappera à la reglementation". État, église, corporations, confréries: à propos des inhumations à Constantinople (IVe–Xe siècle)', in V. Kravari, J. Lefort and C. Morrisson (eds.), *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin*, vol. 1: *VIIIe–XVe siècle* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1991), 155–82; N. Ševčenko, 'Servants of the Holy Icon', in D. Mouriki (ed.), *Byzantine East, Latin West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 547–53. Confraternities are not to be taken as a form of ritual brotherhood, which is between individuals rather than groups: see C. Rapp, 'Ritual Brotherhood in Byzantium', *Traditio* 52 (1997): 285–326, and *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[74] Regarding burial of destitute poor, see Horden, 'Confraternites of Byzantium', 36; Dagron, '"Ainsi rien n'échappera"'; regarding burial of fellow members of confraternities, see Wiita and Nesbitt, 'A Confraternity'; G. Prinzing, 'Spuren einer religiösen Bruderschaft in Epiros um 1225? Zur Deutung der Memorialtexte im *Codex Cromwell* 11', *BZ* 102 (2009): 751–72.

[75] P. Magdalino, 'Church, Bath and *diakonia* in Medieval Byzantium', in R. Morris (ed.), *Church and People in Byzantium* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1990), 165–90.

[76] B. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006), 109–41; Ševčenko, 'Servants of the Holy Icon'.

Appendix

Ἡ μὲν κλίνη πρῶτον μὲν εἰκόνιζε τὴν ὑπεραγίαν Θεοτόκον, ἔπειτα δὲ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου ψυχὴν τῶν σῳζομένων. Διὸ καὶ ἡ Σοφία ἔλεγεν· *Ἰδοὺ ἡ κλίνη τοῦ Σολομῶντος· ἑξήκοντα δυνατοὶ κύκλῳ αὐτῆς ἀπὸ δυνατῶν Ἰσραήλ, πάντες κατέχοντες ῥομφαίαν, δεδιδαγμένοι πόλεμον*. Ὅτι οὖν οὐκ ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας ὁ περὶ τῆς κλίνης λόγος ἐστί, παντὶ δῆλον ἂν γένοιτο διὰ τῶν σωματικῶς περὶ τοῦ Σολομῶντος ἱστορηθέντων, οὗ καὶ τὰ βασίλεια καὶ τὴν τράπεζαν καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ διαγωγὴν μετὰ πάσης ἀκριβείας ὁ λόγος ὑπέγραψε· καινὸν δέ τι καὶ παρηλλαγμένον εἶπε περὶ τῆς κλίνης οὐδέν. **οὐκοῦν εὔδηλον ὅτι** ἄλλος Σολομῶν διὰ τούτου σημαίνεται, ὁ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος Δαυῒδ τὸ κατὰ σάρκα γενόμενος, ᾧ ὄνομα εἰρήνη, ὁ ἀληθινὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ βασιλεύς. τούτου χάριν μία κλίνη τοῦ βασιλέως γίνεται πᾶν τὸ σῳζόμενον· καλῶς τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν σῳζομένων τῷ ἀριθμῷ τῶν ἑξήκοντα κεφαλαιοῦται. χρὴ τοίνυν τὰς πέντε **αἰσθήσεις** φοβεροὺς ὁπλομάχους φύλακας τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνης γένεσθαι· **διότι τῶν ἑξήκοντα ὁ ἀριθμὸς τὸ ἀκαταγώνιστον δηλοῖ τῆς ψυχῆς, ἐπεὶ ἀνακεφαλαιούμεναι αἱ πέντε ἀνὰ δώδεκα πληροῦσι τὸν ἑξήκοντα ἀριθμόν**. θάμβον καὶ ἔκπληξιν ἐμποιοῦσι τοῖς σκοτεινοῖς λογισμοῖς τοῖς ἐν νυξί τε καὶ *σκοτομήνῃ τοῖς εὐθέσι τῇ καρδίᾳ* λογχῶσί τε καὶ *τοξεύουσιν*. ὀφθαλμοῦ ῥομφαία τὸ διαπαντὸς ὁρᾶν πρὸς τὸν κύριον καὶ ὀρθὰ βλέπειν καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν ῥυπαρῶν θεαμάτων καταμολύνεσθαι · ἀκοῆς ὅπλον ὡσαύτως ἡ τῶν θείων δογμάτων ἀκρόασις καὶ τὸ μηδέποτε μάταιον λόγον ἐν αὐτῇ παραδέξασθαι. οὕτως ἐστὶν ὁπλίσαι καὶ τὴν γεῦσιν καὶ τὴν ἁφὴν καὶ τὴν ὄσφρησιν τὰ τῆς ἐγκρατείας ῥομφαίᾳ καταλλήλως ἑκάστην τῶν αἰσθήσεων θωρακίζοντα **τὸν στρατιώτην**, δι᾽ ὧν γίνεται θάμβος καὶ ἔκπληξις τοῖς σκοτεινοῖς ἐχθροῖς ὧν καιρὸς εἰς τὴν κατὰ τῶν ψυχῶν ἐπιβουλὴν ἡ νὺξ γίνεται καὶ τὸ σκότος **τῶν παθῶν**. οὐκοῦν πάντες οἱ τὴν θείαν ἐνδυσάμενοι πανοπλίαν, μίαν κυκλοῦσι τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνην, μία παράταξις καὶ στρατὸς εἷς καὶ μία κλίνη, τουτέστιν ἐκκλησία μία καὶ λαὸς εἷς καὶ νύμφη μία, οἱ πάντες γενήσονται ὑφ᾽ ἑνὶ ταξιάρχῃ καὶ ἐκκλησιαστῇ καὶ νυμφίῳ πρὸς ἑνὸς σώματος κοινωνίαν συναρμοζόμενοι. ὡς μακάριον τὸ ἐν τούτοις εὑρεθῆναι ὁπλίτην ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ καὶ καθαρότητι τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνην, τουτέστι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καρδίαν φυλάσσοντα, ἵνα γένηται ὁ βασιλεὺς οὐκ ἐν καθέδρᾳ ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ἀνακλίσει.

Ἡ κλίνη τοῦ Σολομῶντος ἣ κύκλῳ δορυφοροῦσιν ἐξήκοντα δυνατοί. Ζήτει τὴν ἑρμηνείαν ὄπιθεν τοῦ φύλλοῦ.

Abbreviations

V Vaticanus graecus 1162
P Parisinus graecus 1208

Cant. Canticum canticorum (Song of Songs)
Greg.Nyss., *In Cant.* Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on Song of Songs*, ed. H. Langerbeck, *In Canticum canticorum homiliae* (Leiden: Brill, 1960)

Sources

2–5 Ἰδοὺ … πόλεμον

Cant. 3.7–8, cf. Greg.Nyss., *In Cant.* 6, 190.6–9: Ἰδοὺ ἡ κλίνη τοῦ Σαλωμών, ἑξήκοντα δυνατοὶ κύκλῳ αὐτῆς ἀπὸ δυνατῶν Ἰσραήλ, πάντες κατέχοντες ῥομφαίαν, δεδιδαγμένοι πόλεμον· ἀνὴρ ῥομφαία αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν μηρὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ θάμβους ἐν νυξίν.

5–8 Ὅτι … οὐδέν

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6, 190.9–14: ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας ὁ περὶ τῆς κλίνης λόγος ἐστί, παντὶ δῆλον ἂν γένοιτο διὰ τῶν σωματικῶς περὶ τοῦ Σολομῶνος ἱστορηθέντων, οὗ καὶ τὰ βασίλεια καὶ τὴν τράπεζαν καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ διαγωγὴν μετὰ πάσης ἀκριβείας ὁ λόγος ὑπέγραψεν. καινὸν δέ τι καὶ παρηλλαγμένον εἶπε περὶ τῆς κλίνης οὐδέν

9–10 ἄλλος … βασιλεὺς

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 1, 17.1–4: ἀλλὰ Σολομῶν διὰ τούτου σημαίνεται ἄλλος· ὁ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ τὸ κατὰ σάρκα γενόμενος, ᾧ ὄνομα εἰρήνη, ὁ ἀληθινὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ βασιλεύς

10–11 τούτου χάριν … σῳζόμενον

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6, 197.5–6; τούτου χάριν μία κλίνη τοῦ βασιλέως γίνεται πᾶν τὸ σῳζόμενον

11–12 καλῶς … κεφαλαιοῦται

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6 197.9–11: καλῶς τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν σῳζομένων τῷ ἀριθμῷ τῶν ἑξήκοντα κεφαλαιοῦται

12–13 χρὴ … γένεσθαι

cf. Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6, 195.8–10: χρὴ τοίνυν πέντε ἀφ᾽ ἑκάστης φυλῆς φοβεροὺς ὁπλομάχους φύλακας τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνης γενέσθαι

13–15 διότι … ἀριθμόν

cf. Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6, 195.8–10: διότι πάσης φυλῆς ἀπαρχὴ οἱ πέντε γίνονται, ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς δωδεκάκις κεφαλαιούμενος τὸ πλήρωμα ποιεῖ τῶν ἑξήκοντα.

15–17 θάμβον … τοξεύουσιν

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6. 192, 10–12 θάμβος καὶ ἔκπληξιν ἐμποιεῖ τοῖς σκοτεινοῖς λογισμοῖς τοῖς ἐν νυξί τε καὶ σκοτομήνῃ τοὺς εὐθεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ λοχῶσί τε καὶ τοξεύουσιν

17–21 ὀφθαλμοῦ … θωρακίζοντα

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6, 196.2–8: ὀφθαλμοῦ ῥομφαία τὸ διὰ παντὸς ὁρᾶν πρὸς τὸν κύριον καὶ ὀρθὰ βλέπειν καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν ῥυπαρῶν θεαμάτων καταμολύνεσθαι, ἀκοῆς ὅπλον ὡσαύτως ἡ τῶν θείων διδαγμάτων ἀκρόασις καὶ τὸ μηδέποτε μάταιον λόγον ἐν ἑαυτῇ παραδέξασθαι. οὕτως ἔστιν ὁπλίσαι καὶ τὴν γεῦσιν καὶ τὴν ἁφὴν καὶ τὴν ὄσφρησιν τῇ τῆς ἐγκρατείας ῥομφαίᾳ καταλλήλως ἑκάστην τῶν αἰσθήσεων θωρακίζοντα

22–23 δι᾽ ὧν … σκότος

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 9. 196, 9–11: δι᾽ ὧν γίνεται θάμβος καὶ ἔκπληξις τοῖς σκοτεινοῖς ἐχθροῖς, ὧν καιρὸς εἰς τὴν κατὰ τῶν ψυχῶν ἐπιβουλὴν ἡ νὺξ γίνεται καὶ τὸ σκότος

23–24 οὐκοῦν … κλίνην

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6, 197.13–14: οὐκοῦν πάντες οἱ τὴν θείαν ἐνδυσάμενος πανοπλίαν μίαν κυκλοῦσι τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνην

25–27 μία … συναρμοζόμενοι

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6, 197.17–198.2: μία παράταξις καὶ στρατὸς εἷς καὶ μία κλίνη, τουτέστιν ἐκκλησία μία καὶ λαὸς εἷς καὶ νύμφη μία οἱ πάντες γενήσονται ὑφ᾽ ἑνὶ ταξιάρχῃ καὶ ἐκκλησιαστῇ καὶ νυμφίῳ πρὸς ἑνὸς σώματος κοινωνίαν συναρμοζόμενοι

27–28 ὡς … φυλάσσοντα

Greg.Nyss., *In Cant*. 6, 198.19–199.4: ὡς μακάριον τὸ ἐν τούτοις εὑρεθῆναι ἢ παιδίον ἢ ὁπλίτην ἢ ἀληθινὸν Ἰσραηλίτην γενόμενον, ὡς μὲν Ἰσραηλίτην ἐν καθαρᾷ καρδίᾳ τὸν θεὸν ὁρῶντα, ὡς δὲ ὁπλίτην ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ καὶ καθαρότητι τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως κλίνην, τουτέστιν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καρδίαν φυλάσσοντα

28–29 ἵνα … ἀνακλίσει

Greg.Nyss, *In Cant*. 3, 85.8–9; cf. Iak., *Ep*. 11.77–8: ἵνα γένηται ὁ βασιλεὺς οὐκ ἐν καθέδρᾳ, φησίν, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀνακλίσει αὐτοῦ

Scriptural Quotations/Allusions

2–5: Cant. 3:7–8
16–17: Psalm 10:2

Textual Comments

1 It is not usual to duplicate μὲν in this way.

15 θάμβος is a third declension neuter noun; it is here treated as a second declension masculine or neuter, presumably by attraction to ἔκπληξιν; it is used correctly in line 22, where ἔκπληξις is also in the nominative (as in the source); θάμβον does not appear in the TLG.

16 It is very tempting to emend τοῖς εὐθέσι to τοὺς εὐθεῖς, as in Psalm 10.2 and the passage from Gregory of Nyssa that is used here; the dative presumably appears by attraction to the many datives at this point, and makes no sense.

17–19 The infinitives in this sentence have greater justification in the source passage where they function as exemplifications following a question: 'Is it clear that (ἢ δῆλόν ἐστιν ὅτι) each man represents one of the five senses? The sword of the eye looks (ὁρᾶν) to the Lord …'

32 Caption. Although the grammarians (e.g. Phrynichus, Pseudo-Zonaras) insist that ὄπισθεν is the correct form, ὄπιθεν is not infrequent and is found, for example, in several manuscripts of Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* where it is accepted into Reinsch's edition five times (as against thirty-nine times for ὄπισθεν), so ὄπιθεν can stand here.

These points suggest that Iakovos, despite the ingenuity with which he manipulated his sources, was not comfortable with high-level grammar and syntax.

PART IV

New Narratives in the Middle Byzantine Period: Marian Hagiography

14 | *The Life of the Theotokos* by Epiphanios of Kallistratos

A Monastic Approach to an Apocryphal Story

MARY B. CUNNINGHAM

Epiphanios, who belonged to the Kallistratos monastery in Constantinople in the late eighth or early ninth century, conceived his *Life of the Theotokos* as a new literary venture.[1] Acknowledging the 'authoritative and true' teachings of earlier writers, including prophets, apostles and 'holy fathers', but criticising their focus on isolated aspects of the Virgin's life, such as her birth and death,[2] this monastic writer undertook to provide a complete account, extending from birth to death. Epiphanios defended his occasional use of apocryphal (or even, as he saw it, 'heretical') texts in this hagiographical project on the grounds that even such sources could sometimes offer true information.[3] It is surprising to note, in the light of such self-proclaimed transparency, that many elements in Epiphanios' account of Mary's life do not correspond with those contained in the surviving apocryphal sources,[4] patristic homilies or even the canonical Gospels. Epiphanios appears to have adapted the story of the Virgin's infancy and subsequent role as Birth-Giver of Christ freely in

[1] BHG 1049; CANT 91; G. L. Mingarelli (ed.), *Anecdota litteraria*, vol. 3 (Rome, 1774), 29–94; repr. PG 120, 185–216; A. Dressel (ed.), *Epiphanii monachi et presbyteri edita et inedita* (Paris and Leipzig: Brockhaus and Avenarius, 1843), 13–44. According to the Pinakes database at the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, Epiphanios' *Life of the Virgin* is transmitted in forty-seven manuscripts. A critical edition would be desirable since significant differences exist between the versions provided by Mingarelli and Dressel. For the purposes of this chapter, I have followed that of Dressel but have also cited PG for ease of reference. The latter should be handled with care since it contains a number of typographical errors.

[2] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii,* 15; PG 120, 185.

[3] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii,* 14; PG 120, 188 B: 'Even if we should take something from the apocryphal or heretical texts, let no one find fault with us. "… because the testimonies of enemies are worthy of greater trust", as the great Basil says'; see Basil of Caesarea, *Homily on the Nativity of Christ*, PG 31, 1469 (with reference to the witness of the Persian Magi to the divinity of Christ); for further discussion of this passage, see Chapter 15, n. 42.

[4] For the purposes of this chapter, I am defining 'apocryphal' as a text that was not included in the biblical canon (as defined by Church councils and Fathers by about the end of the fourth century AD). Many early Christian 'apocryphal' texts, such as the *Protevangelium of James*, circulated widely and were even read in liturgical settings, however; see S. J. Voicu, 'Ways to Survival for the Infancy Apocrypha', in C. Clivaz, A. Detetwiler, L. Devilleres and E. Norelli, with B. Bertho (eds.), *Infancy Gospels: Stories and Identities* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 401–17; A. Gregory and C. Tuckett (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

order to stress above all her asceticism and personal piety. It is possible that such emphasis reflected the needs of a largely monastic audience, which – whether male or female – increasingly regarded the Virgin Mary as a model of ascetic virtue.[5]

Before examining the unique narrative that Epiphanios provided for the life of the Virgin Mary, it is worth outlining briefly what we know about this somewhat obscure writer.[6] He has been identified as a monk priest who lived at the Kallistratos monastery in Constantinople, probably during the Iconoclastic period.[7] The time at which he was active can only be determined by internal evidence, most of which appears in another hagiographical text that is attributed to the same author, namely, the *Life and Acts of the Apostle Andrew*.[8] Here Epiphanios tells his readers that he, along with another monk named James, travelled to Sinope on the Black Sea, where they discovered a house in which Andrew had lived, along with a marble icon of the saint. One of the two monks who currently occupied the house and who was sixty years of age, told the visitors that he had lived through the reign of Constantine V and that some 'icon-fighters' (*eikonomachoi*) had sought to destroy the icon.[9] This detail indicates an early ninth-century date for the composition of this text. The *Life* of the Theotokos was probably written in about the same period – or possibly slightly earlier – since the latest literary sources that it cites belong to the first half of the eighth century. Another Epiphanios, who was known only as the 'monk' and 'hagiopolites' and who compiled a guidebook (*diegesis*) for pilgrims travelling to Syria and the Holy Land, appears to be a different author.[10] Our Epiphanios betrays

[5] For further discussion of this development in Byzantine veneration of the Virgin Mary, see Chapter 9 by Fr Damaskinos Olkinuora.

[6] For orientation, see J. Darrouzès, 'Epiphane de Constantinople', *DS* 4/1 (1960): 862–3; J. Darrouzès, 'Epiphane, moine de Constantinople', *DHGE* 15 (1963): 614–15; J. Dräsecke, 'Der Mönch und Presbyter Epiphanios', *BZ* 4 (1895): 346–62; E. Kurtz, 'Ein bibliographisches Monitum für den Verfasser des Aufsatzes Der Mönch und Presbyter Epiphanios', *BZ* 6 (1897): 214–17.

[7] S. Mimouni, 'Les *Vies de la Vierge*: état de la question', in S. Mimouni, *Les traditions anciennes sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de Marie: Études littéraires, historiques, et doctrinales* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 89.

[8] Although some scholars dispute this identification, others accept it. For the former, see Dräsecke, 'Der Mönch und Presbyter Epiphanios', 350; for the latter, Kurtz, 'Ein bibliographisches Monitum', 216. Both Mimouni and Kazhdan also believe the authors of the two *Lives* to be the same Epiphanios; see Mimouni, 'Les Vies de la Vierge', 89; A. Kazhdan in collaboration with L. F. Sherry and C. Angelidi, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1999), 307–8.

[9] Epiphanios, *Life, Acts and Passion of St Andrew*, Dressel, *Epiphanii,* 47; PG 120, 220B.

[10] H. Donner, Palästinabeschreibung des Epiphanios Hagiopolita', *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 87 (1971): 42–91; Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature*, 307, 390.

ignorance of the topography of Jerusalem, as we shall see below, although he clearly wishes to convey the impression that he knows details about the Virgin Mary's life that are lacking in other sources.[11]

Epiphanios of Kallistratos' *Life* of the Virgin Mary has often been grouped with three other texts that were probably all produced in the Middle Byzantine period.[12] These include a *Life of the Virgin* which is ascribed to Maximos the Confessor but survives only in a late tenth-century Georgian translation,[13] a *Life* by the tenth-century redactor Symeon the Metaphrast,[14] and another that was composed by John Geometres, a high-style orator who also lived in the second half of the tenth century.[15] All of these *Lives* focus not only on the character and activities of the Theotokos as a holy person in her own right, but also – except in the Metaphrastic text – on her asceticism and piety.[16] Although these works are usually classified as 'hagiography', they in fact contain – to a greater or lesser extent – homiletic and even hymnographic features. The 'Life' by John Geometres, for example, represents a collection of separate orations on the events of Mary's legendary life that are celebrated in liturgical feasts. It may therefore have

11 See my n. 52.

12 S. Mimouni, 'Les *Vies de la Vierge*'; M. B. Cunningham, 'The *Life* of the Virgin Mary According to Middle Byzantine Preachers and Hagiographers: Changing Contexts and Perspectives', *Apocrypha* 27 (2016): 137–59.

13 The Georgian *Life* of the Virgin is listed as CANT 90. It is edited and translated in M. van Esbroeck (ed. and trans.), *Maxime le Confesseur: Vie de la Vierge*, 2 vols., CSCO 478–9, Scriptores Iberici 21–2 (Leuven: Peeters, 1986); S. J. Shoemaker (ed. and trans.), *Maximus the Confessor, The Life of the Virgin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012). Concerning the controversy over the dating and attribution of this text, see ibid., 14–22; P. Booth, 'On the *Life of the Virgin* Attributed to Maximus the Confessor', *JTS*, n.s., 66.1 (2015): 149–203; and Shoemaker's reply to Booth in 'The (Pseudo?-)Maximus *Life of the Virgin* and the Byzantine Marian Tradition', *JTS*, n.s., 67.1 (2016): 115–42. Booth argues, mainly on the basis of his understanding of Maximos' oeuvre and of the content of the Georgian *Life*, that the lost Greek prototype for the text should be dated no earlier than the tenth century, whereas Shoemaker, following van Esbroeck, supports an early seventh-century (although not necessarily Maximian) provenance. I have chosen to follow Booth since I believe that the highly developed Mariology that appears in the Georgian *Life* belongs to a later phase in this tradition; for more detailed discussion, see Cunningham, 'Life of the Virgin Mary', esp. 148–51.

14 Symeon the Metaphrast, *Life of the Virgin Mary* (BHG 1047–8; 1048a–b; CANT 93); B. Latyshev (ed.), *Menologii anonymi byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt* (St Petersburg: Akademii Nauk, 1912), vol. 2, 345–82.

15 John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin Mary* (BHG 1143c; CANT 92). The final section of the *Life*, which is devoted to the dormition of the Mother of God, is edited and translated in A. Wenger, *L'Assomption de la très sainte Vierge dans la tradition Byzantine du V^{ie} au Xe siècle*, Archives de l'Orient Chrétien 5 (Paris: Institut français d' études byzantines, 1955), 363–415.

16 For discussion of all four texts, as well as a fifth example which survives only in Syriac, see Mimouni, 'Les *Vies de la Vierge*'; see also Cunningham, '*Life* of the Virgin Mary'.

been intended as a set of readings that could be delivered throughout the liturgical year in both private and public settings.[17]

As mentioned above, Epiphanios focuses especially on the narrative of Mary's life, as opposed to praise or invocation of his holy subject. His text has attracted some scholarly attention in recent years although this is usually in connection with the rest of the Marian hagiographical tradition. Simon Mimouni suggests, for example, that Epiphanios adopted a more literal approach to Mary's biography than did the other hagiographers, avoiding miraculous elements or theological speculation about her dormition and assumption into heaven.[18] Stephen Shoemaker mentions the *Life* in various studies, always in connection with his work on the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* that is attributed to Maximos.[19] He notes that Epiphanios – in spite of his stated aim – focuses his narrative as much on Christ as on Mary, at least in the sections that deal with his ministry, passion and resurrection.[20] Although it is true that Epiphanios adheres more closely to the canonical Gospels in this respect than does the Georgian *Life of the Virgin*, it is worth reiterating that the text begins and ends with Mary's birth and death. Apart from some earlier studies that attempted to shed light on the identity and surviving oeuvre of its monastic author,[21] no detailed or interpretative work

[17] For discussion of the forthcoming critical edition of the text, along with an account of both Wenger's and van Esbroeck's work on the project, see Chapter 15 by Fr Maximos Constas. In the absence to this date of a published edition, I have consulted one good manuscript, Cod. Vat. gr. 504 (AD 1105), ff. 172^{v}–194^{v}, in the analysis that follows. For discussion of this and other surviving manuscripts, see Wenger, *L' Assomption*, 186–9.

[18] Mimouni includes a fifth *Life* of the Virgin (composed in Syriac and identified as 'Nestorian') in his study: BHO 643–65; CANT 94; E. A. Wallis Budge (ed. and trans.), *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ which the Jews of Tiberias Made to Mock on,* vol. 1*: The Syriac Texts* (London: Luzac, 1899), 3–146; vol. 2: *The Translations* (London: Luzac, 1899), 3–160. For analysis of this text (which I have chosen to omit from this study on the grounds that it is probably late and composite in nature) and of that by Epiphanios, see Mimouni 'Les *Vies de la Vierge*', 89–94, 105–12.

[19] S. J. Shoemaker, 'The Virgin Mary in the Ministry of Jesus and the Early Church According to the Earliest *Life of the Virgin*', *HThR* 98:4 (2005): 441–67; S. J. Shoemaker, 'The Georgian *Life of the Virgin* Attributed to Maximus the Confessor: Its Authenticity (?) and Importance', in A. Muraviev and B. Lourié (eds.), *Universum Hagiographicum. Mémorial R. P. Michel van Esbroeck, S.J.*, *Scrinium*, vol. 2 (St Petersburg: Byzantinorossica, 2006), 307–28; S. J. Shoemaker, 'A Mother's Passion: Mary at the Crucifixion and Resurrection in the Earliest *Life of the Virgin* and Its Influence on George of Nikomedeia's Passion Homilies', in L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (eds.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 53–67; Shoemaker, *Maximus, The Life of the Virgin,* 14.

[20] Shoemaker, 'Virgin Mary in the Ministry', 457–8.

[21] See my n. 6.

has yet been undertaken on what may be the earliest Byzantine example of a full-length *Life* of the Virgin Mary.[22]

Reinterpretation of the Virgin's Story: A Literal Approach?

Epiphanios of Kallistratos' *Life* of the 'supremely holy Theotokos' offers, as already mentioned, a compilation of material drawn from earlier Christian and Byzantine literary sources. In his prologue the monastic writer stresses both the reliability of his textual sources and his own ability to interpret these correctly. He cites, but also criticises, the accounts of James 'the Hebrew',[23] an obscure writer called Aphrodisian the Persian,[24] Eusebius of Caesarea, Dionysius the Areopagite, John of Thessalonike and a few other Greek writers.[25] However, Epiphanios singles out Andrew of Crete's panegyrical narratives of events in the Virgin's life as being most worthy of praise; this probably reflects the popularity which this preacher continued to enjoy a few generations after his death.[26] Although such citations may be intended to add credibility to Epiphanios' narrative, he diverges in significant ways from the post-biblical Marian accounts (both apocryphal and patristic) that were gradually gaining acceptance in the Byzantine homiletic tradition. Some of these variations are shared with the other three Byzantine *Lives*, as we shall see, but some are unique to Epiphanios. Owing to the fact that no modern translation of his work is available, it is worth

[22] It is worth noting, however, that attempts at composing a continuous narrative about the Virgin Mary's life and death had occurred as early as the late fifth or early sixth century in the Syriac-speaking Christian world. See C. Naffah, 'Les "Histoires" Syriaques de la Vierge: traditions apocryphes anciennes et récentes', *Apocrypha* 20 (2009): 115–36.

[23] Epiphanios may refer here to the author of the polemical text known as the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati,* ed. V. Déroche, TM 11 (Paris: CNRS, 1991), 47–229, which also contains a genealogy of the Virgin Mary. See Déroche, *Doctrina Jacobi*, Introduction, 49; however, when Epiphanios mentions 'James the Hebrew' again, at Dressel, *Epiphanii,* 23 and PG 120, 200A, he appears to be referring to the author of the *Protevangelium of James*.

[24] According to Mimouni, this refers to a dialogue on religious questions, which probably took place at the Sassanian court. The work probably belongs to the end of the sixth century and is ascribed in many manuscripts to the seventh-century writer Anastasios of Sinai. See Mimouni, 'Les *Vies de la Vierge*', 90, n. 49; A. A. Vasiliev, *Anecdota graeco-byzantina* (Moscow: Universitas Caesarea, 1873), vol. 1, 73–125.

[25] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii,* 14–15; PG 120, 185–8. These also include Hippolytos of Thebes and (ps-) Julius Sextus Africanus, who composed a work on 'events happening in Persia on the birth of Christ'. See Hippolytos of Thebes, *Chronicle*, ed. F. Diekamp, *Hippolytos von Theben* (Münster: n.p., 1898); ps-Julius Africanus, *De rebus persicis post Christum natum*, ed. E. Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden*, TU19.3 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1899); PG 10, 98–108.

[26] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii,* 14; PG 120, 187A.

describing significant narrative features of Epiphanios' *Life of the Theotokos* and comparing them with those found in other Marian sources of the early Christian and Byzantine periods.

The early ninth-century monastic writer follows his prologue with a genealogy of the Virgin Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna. This closely resembles one which appears in John of Damascus' *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, although it does not follow it verbatim.[27] The purpose of this section of the *Life* is to prove that Mary (who provided Christ with his human nature and lineage) was descended from both royal and priestly lines within the Judaic nation.[28] Genealogies (or a preoccupation with Christ's descent from David through Mary's ancestors) appear frequently in some Marian festal sermons,[29] but also feature in both Christian and Jewish polemical treatises that were produced throughout the Early Christian and Byzantine periods.[30] As Fr Maximos Constas has also pointed out, the biological descent of both Mary and her son acquired extra theological significance during the period of Iconoclasm, as iconophile preachers used their genealogy in order to demonstrate the reality of Christ's incarnation.[31]

Epiphanios then recounts how Joachim and Anna, both of whose families came from Bethlehem, married and went to the city of Nazareth in Galilee. He adds that the pious couple's period of infertility lasted for fifty years and that after this, on the feast of the dedication of the Temple (*enkainia*),[32] they returned to Jerusalem where Joachim, while praying in

[27] John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith* 4.14, ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 2 (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1973), 199.32–200.44; trans. F. H. Chase, *St John of Damascus. Writings* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 363. This genealogy diverges in important ways from those that appear in Mt 1:1–17 and Lk 3:23–38 because it attempts to trace Mary's, as well as Joseph's, descent from David. John prefaces his genealogy by explaining that the Jews tended to marry within their own tribes.

[28] Mimouni, 'Les *Vies de la Vierge*', 91. On the importance of genealogies of both Jesus and Mary during the late antique period, see also W. Adler, 'On the Priesthood of Jesus: A New Translation and Introduction', in T. Burke and B. Landau (eds.), *New Testament Apocrypha: More Non-Canonical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), vol. 1, esp. 71–4.

[29] E.g. Andrew of Crete, *Homily II on the Nativity of the Virgin Mary* (*CPG* 8171; BHG 1080), PG 97, 824A, 841A; *Homily III on the Nativity of the Virgin Mary* (*CPG* 8172; BHG 1127), PG 97, 845A–B.

[30] See e.g. Déroche, *Doctrina Jacobi*, 130; D. J. Lasker and S. Stroumsa (ed. and trans.), *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest. Qiṣṣat Mujādalat al-Usquf and Sefer Nestor Ha-Komer*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities, 1996), 34, 68, 81–2, 114–15, 153, 164–5.

[31] See Chapter 15 by Fr Maximos Constas.

[32] According to the *Protevangelium of James* (1.2), Joachim brought his gifts to the Temple on the 'great day of the Lord' (probably the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur); see J. K. Elliott (trans.), *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in*

the Temple, heard a voice from heaven telling him that he would have a child. Anna, who was by now an old woman, duly conceived and gave birth to a daughter whom they named Mary. We notice here a variation from the narrative of the *Protevangelium of James*, which places Joachim's vision in the wilderness (whither he had withdrawn after having his gifts rejected at the Temple) and relates a separate annunciation to Anna, who was mourning and praying in her garden.[33] This variation is repeated in (ps-) Maximos' *Life of the Virgin*, although, unlike Epiphanios, the author of this text follows the *Protevangelium* in focusing on Anna's reception of the good news in her garden.[34]

After relating the birth of the Virgin Mary, Epiphanios once again diverges slightly in his account, not only from the *Protevangelium* but also from the other three *Lives* of the Theotokos, in his narrative of her dedication to the Temple. Although he describes how Joachim and Anna presented the three-year-old child, along with gifts, to the priest of the Temple in Jerusalem, they returned to Nazareth after this ceremony. They waited until Mary was seven years old before entrusting her to the care of the Temple and its ministers; Joachim, having reached the age of eighty, died shortly afterwards and Anna, on being widowed, moved to Jerusalem in order to be closer to her daughter. She in turn died at the age of seventy-two.[35] Several lines later, Epiphanios adds the information that Mary learned her Hebrew letters from her father Joachim before he died.[36]

The next important variation from the traditional narrative of Mary's sojourn in the Temple (where, according to the *Protevangelium of James*, 'she received food from the hand of an angel'),[37] appears not only in Epiphanios' *Life of the Theotokos*, but also in the *Lives* by (ps-) Maximos and John Geometres.[38] This is the story, which appears to belong exclusively to the Marian hagiographical tradition, of Mary's vision of light when she was praying before the altar in front of the doors of the sanctuary (or 'Holy of Holies') in the Temple at the age of twelve. According to Epiphanios, (ps-) Maximos and John Geometres, the Virgin also heard a voice emanating from the sanctuary, which said, 'You will bear my Son.'

an English Translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 57. Epiphanios visualises the Jerusalem Temple as a Christian church throughout his *Life of the Theotokos*.

[33] *Protevangelium* 1.4–4.2, in Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 57–8.

[34] Shoemaker, *Maximus, The Life of the Virgin* 4, 39.

[35] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 16–17; PG 120, 192A–B.

[36] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 17; PG 120, 192C.

[37] *Protevangelium* 8.1; Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 60.

[38] Shoemaker, *Maximus, The Life of the Virgin* 14, 46; John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin*, Vat. gr. 504, f. 175.

Epiphanios goes on to say that on hearing these words, Mary 'remained silent, not telling anyone of the mystery until Christ had ascended [into heaven]'.[39] This striking episode, which undermines (in both dramatic and theological terms) the story of the annunciation that appears in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 1:26–38), nevertheless evokes biblical parallels, especially the prophet Samuel's boyhood vision in Solomon's Temple (1 Kgdms (LXX); 1 Sam 3:1–14). The story about the young Virgin Mary's vision in the Temple also appears, interestingly enough, in a much earlier and composite apocryphal text, namely, the *Questions of Bartholomew*, which is dated between the second and the sixth centuries.[40]

Epiphanios' account of the Virgin Mary's betrothal to Joseph, life in his home (where she guides and cares for his two daughters – even though they are older than her), annunciation, conception and birth of Christ shares many features (such as Mary's active role within Joseph's household) with the other three *Lives of the Theotokos*. Where it diverges from some of them (especially those by (ps-) Maximos and John Geometres), however, is in its failure to place Mary at the centre of the action throughout the period of Christ's ministry, passion, and resurrection – as the other Byzantine *Lives* (with the exception of that by Symeon the Metaphrast) so strikingly do.[41] In the scene of the Marriage at Cana (Jn 2:1–11), which all but Symeon embroider with the tale of the bridegroom's (and sometimes the bride's) decision to renounce their marriage vows in order to become disciples of Christ, Epiphanios alone makes no mention of the Virgin Mary's presence at the wedding.[42] Here he departs from John the Evangelist's account not only with respect to the outcome of the wedding, but also in neglecting Mary's agency in the Gospel story.

More significantly, Epiphanios does not describe, as (ps-) Maximos does, any continuing influence of his mother on Christ's subsequent ministry and miracles. This section of the text is concerned more with retelling the life of Christ than with celebrating the Virgin Mary's presence at his side. Nevertheless, Epiphanios does describe various women, such as Mary Magdalene, who, after being healed or converted (or both), remained with the Theotokos for the rest of their lives.[43] Such references have echoes of

[39] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 18–19; PG 120, 193B–C.

[40] J.-D. Kaestli and P. Cherix (ed. and trans.), *L'Évangile de Barthélemy d'après deux écrits apocryphes* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), 111–12. Kaestli and Cherix suggest that Epiphanios may have been familiar with this text; ibid., 42–4.

[41] See Shoemaker, 'Virgin Mary in the Ministry', 457–8.

[42] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 31–2; PG 120, 205C–D; Shoemaker, *Maximus, Life of the Virgin* 68, 95–6; John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin*, Vat. gr. 504, f. 182v.

[43] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 34–5; PG 120, 208C–D.

the more extensive celebration of Mary's didactic and apostolic qualities, which she demonstrated throughout Christ's ministry and beyond, in (ps-) Maximos' *Life of the Virgin*; in contrast to this source, however, we find little emphasis on this aspect of her role in Epiphanios. Indeed, when the hagiographer narrates the story of Christ's passion and resurrection, he removes the Theotokos almost entirely from both scenes. According to Epiphanios, after standing at the foot of the cross with the disciple John, the latter led her away to his home on Sion.[44] Nor did the Virgin Mary attend the tomb with the other myrrh-bearers because, according to the hagiographer, she was prostrate with grief. After having delegated an angel to speak with Mary Magdalene at the tomb, Christ appeared to his mother at John's house so that she might be the first person to see him after the resurrection.[45] Although it does thus emphasise Mary's importance to her son, this account contrasts with the more radical, or dynamic, retelling of the passion and resurrection scenes that appears in (ps-) Maximos' *Life of the Virgin*.[46] As Shoemaker has emphasised, the latter source adjusts the Gospel narratives in order to place the Mother of God at the centre of action. She is responsible for arranging Christ's deposition from the cross and requisitioning the tomb.[47] According to this account, Mary also remains alone beside the tomb throughout the night and is thus, once again, the first to witness her son's resurrection from the dead.[48] The Georgian *Life* goes on to portray the Virgin Mary as teacher and leader of the apostles, once Christ has ascended into heaven.[49] She is the 'matriarch' of the early Christian community, according to Shoemaker, with a leadership role that includes not only didactic and advisory aspects, but which oversees every aspect of the apostles' activity.[50]

Epiphanios of Kallistratos places less emphasis on the Virgin Mary's importance in the apostolic community after Christ's ascension into heaven, but he does describe her ongoing life of asceticism and prayer. Citing the eighth-century bishop Andrew of Crete as witness, he tells his readers that indentations on the marble floor of the upper room on Sion can be seen to this day, marking the place where the Theotokos knelt to pray.[51] Somewhat undermining the personal knowledge of the Holy Land that this statement might be intended to imply, Epiphanios goes on to say that Sion is located

[44] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 36; PG 120, 209B.
[45] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 36–7; PG 120, 209B–C.
[46] Shoemaker, *Maximus, Life of the Virgin* 73–93, 101–21.
[47] Shoemaker, 'Virgin Mary in the Ministry', 449–53.
[48] Shoemaker, *Maximus, Life of the Virgin*, 92–3, 119–20.
[49] Ibid., 94, 121–2.
[50] Shoemaker, 'Virgin Mary in the Ministry', 455.
[51] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 38; PG 120, 212A.

in the same place in Jerusalem as Gethsemane.[52] The hagiographer then describes the death, or dormition, of the Theotokos, referring to Dionysius the Areopagite as witness of this mystery, before providing an account which for the most part follows the apocryphal version of the story which had become dominant by this time in the Byzantine liturgical tradition.[53] It was when the apostles had arrived at her bedside, according to Epiphanios, that the Virgin Mary revealed the mysteries which she had guarded secretly in her heart until this time, including the vision which she had experienced in the Temple at the age of twelve.[54] He concludes by calculating Mary's age at the time of her death, arriving at seventy-two years on the basis of both biblical and apocryphal traditions.[55] The *Life* ends rather abruptly, with none of the Marian acclamations or praise that characterise the epilogues of the other three *Lives* – not to mention most Marian festal homilies.

Whereas Epiphanios' *Life* of the Theotokos thus shares certain narrative elements with the other surviving examples of Byzantine Marian hagiography, it also contains some distinctive features. This writer adheres to his stated aim of providing an unadorned and 'accurate' history of the Virgin's life and death. Although he describes a few miracles that she enacted towards the end of her life, Epiphanios does not exalt the Theotokos as leader and guide of the apostles, as some of the other *Lives* do. The monastic writer is interested in calculating the number of years that important figures, including not only Mary, but also her parents Joachim and Anna, lived; he also tries to situate their movements, as well as those of Christ, on the basis of his limited knowledge of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Epiphanios provides detailed descriptions of how both Jesus and his mother Mary looked:[56] he describes the Theotokos as having wheat-coloured skin, fair hair and eyes, and a long face, hands and fingers. In short, she was beautiful according, we presume, to Byzantine cultural standards of this period.[57] This *Life* thus appears, as scholars have so

[52] 'Σιὼν δὲ καὶ Γεθσημανῆ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐστιν …', Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 38; PG 120, 212A–B.

[53] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 40–3; PG 120, 212C–216A.

[54] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 42; PG 120, 213C.

[55] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 44; PG 120, 216B.

[56] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 18 (Mary): 29 (Christ); PG 120, 193A–B (Mary), 204C (Christ).

[57] On physical beauty according to the Byzantines, see M. Hatzaki, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly', in L. James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 93–107. It is also worth noting that similar descriptions of Christ (and sometimes Mary) appear in other texts of about the same period; cf. J. A. Munitiz, J. Chrysostomides, E. Harvalia-Crook and C. Dendrinos (eds.), *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos and*

far emphasised, to represent a relatively unsophisticated response to the challenges presented by a mass of conflicting, often apocryphal, accounts of Christ's holy family – and especially of his mother Mary – that were circulating in the Byzantine world in this period. Although prepared to deviate from the Gospel narratives in certain instances, Epiphanios both acknowledges their silence with respect to important parts of the Virgin Mary's biography and anchors his story in the witness of sources that he deems reliable and orthodox. The importance of this text thus rests on its role as the first witness of a distinct hagiographical narrative, which would be elaborated about a century later into the much more sophisticated combination of pious narrative and liturgical praise that we see in the tenth-century *Lives of the Theotokos*.[58]

The Purpose and Intended Audience of Epiphanios' *Life of the Virgin*

On the basis of the preceding summary of Epiphanios of Kallistratos' Marian *Life*, it is worth assessing both the purpose of such a literary composition and for what kind of audience it may have been intended. Since the author lived during the period of controversy over holy images, it is worth asking whether his restrained approach both to Marian devotion and to the miraculous elements in the Virgin's narrative reflects an iconoclast stance.[59] These aspects of Epiphanios' *Life* recall the criteria which Auzépy cites in relation to iconoclastic *Lives* of saints.[60] However, two arguments undermine this hypothesis: first, the *Life and Acts* of the apostle Andrew, which is also ascribed to our Epiphanios, explicitly rejects Iconoclasm and

Related Texts (London: Porpyrogenitus Press, 1997), 30 (Christ); ps-Julius Sextus Africanus, *De rebus persicis,* Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch,* 17.22; PG 10, 108A (Christ and Mary). J. Chrysostomides suggests that descriptive lists of Christ's features began to circulate in the post-Iconoclastic period, in order to assist icon painters in their newly endorsed task of producing icons of Christ and his mother; see J. Chrysostomides, 'An Investigation Concerning the Authenticity of the *Letter of the Three Patriarchs*', in Munitiz et al., *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs*, xxiii. See also H. Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

58 On the possible dates of the four Byzantine *Lives* of the Virgin, see above, n. 13.

59 Mimouni, 'Les *Vies de la Vierge*', 92.

60 M.-F. Auzépy, 'L'analyse littéraire et l'historien: l'example des vies de saints iconoclastes', *Byzantinoslavica* 53 (1992): 57–67. To this study, we may add the seminal article by I. Ševčenko, 'Hagiography of the Iconoclast Period', in A. A. M. Bryer and J. Herrin (eds.), *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977), 113–31, which reaches similar conclusions.

celebrates both relics and icons of the saint.[61] Second, Epiphanios' interest in the physical appearance of the Virgin Mary and her son must reflect his commitment to the iconophile belief in the reality of Christ's incarnation and the expedience – indeed necessity – of portraying his physical nature in icons. His stress on the historicity of his holy subjects' sojourn in first-century Judea, as affirmed by what he believes to be apostolic witnesses and physical signs (such as the indentations in the house on Sion caused by Mary's knees), testify to this writer's belief in the circumscribability of Christ, as God and man, along with his biological descent from a human mother and her ancestors. The literal, or historical, approach that Epiphanios adopts towards his subject may reflect a more general exploration of the encounter between divine and created reality that was manifesting itself among iconophiles and iconoclasts alike during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.[62] Epiphanios is reticent about exactly where he stands on the role of saints, relics and icons in this text, but he does display the same interest in the physical manifestations of holiness that appears in his *Life* of the apostle Andrew.

The audience for which Epiphanios intended his *Life of the Virgin* appears to have been a monastic one.[63] We have already noted aspects of his narrative that portray Mary as a model of asceticism and monastic virtue. The story of her vision in the Temple at the age of twelve serves to remind readers or hearers of the Virgin's pious disposition and activities. Epiphanios remarks in this context that she was 'holy in every way, spoke little, [and was] promptly obedient, courteous, reticent towards everyone, serious, unruffled, never angry, reverent'.[64] The vision, or auditory experience, took place during a quiet period when, although the other young virgins had left the Temple, Mary continued to guard the sanctuary and pray to God. The longer story of the marriage at Cana, which appears in three of the four Byzantine *Lives*, shifts the focus of the Johannine story to the vows of celibacy taken by the bridegroom (and, in some accounts, the bride) and away from the power of Christ's first miracle and the role that his mother played on this occasion. Epiphanios emphasises the monastic qualities of the Theotokos in a number of other passages throughout the *Life*. She continues to practise asceticism when she moves into Joseph's house

[61] Epiphanios of Kallistratos, *Life, Acts, and Demise of the Apostle Andrew* (BHG 102); Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 45–82; PG 120, 216–60. For discussion of the text, see Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)*, 307–8.

[62] G. Dagron, 'L'hagiographie en question, Ve–Xie siècle', *DOP* 46 (1992): 59–68.

[63] This argument is made at more length in Cunningham, 'Life of the Virgin Mary'.

[64] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 18; PG 120, 192C–193A.

after the betrothal, during Christ's ministry and after the resurrection, as we saw earlier. Epiphanios describes Mary's demeanour while living in John the Theologian's house on Sion as similar to that of a monastic saint: 'she devoted herself to asceticism and kneeling', sleeping little and praying constantly.[65] Christ's male and female disciples offer similar models of ascetic piety throughout the text. In short, Epiphanios' *Life* of the Theotokos may be read not only as an attempt at realistic biography, but also as an ascetic handbook based on an imagined apostolic model.

Such a portrayal of the Theotokos recalls a strand of Marian devotion that appeared earlier, especially in fourth-century monastic contexts. Athanasius of Alexandria, for example, presented the Virgin Mary as a model for contemporary virgins, describing her ascetic life of prayer and modest demeanour.[66] Although Byzantine preachers occasionally revived this image in their festal sermons, it never played a dominant role in liturgical celebration.[67] Liturgical texts, including homilies and hymns, tended more often to focus on the Christological and intercessory aspects of Marian devotion, exalting her on the basis of her maternal relationship with Christ rather than for her personal achievements. Focus on Mary's ascetic qualities and practices in the Middle Byzantine hagiographical tradition thus seems to reflect the monastic background of this genre. The one exception to this rule, which is revealed in its reversion to more traditional (that is, liturgical) versions of Mary's story as opposed to the variations that we have seen in the other Marian hagiographical texts, including that by Epiphanios, is Symeon the Metaphrast's *Life of the Virgin Mary*.[68] This text, which is in many ways closer to the traditional narrative that came to be represented not only in homilies but also in art, was probably intended for a wider, more worldly, audience than the authors of the other three hagiographical texts had in mind. It belonged to a metaphrastic project that was intended to offer devotional reading for every day of the liturgical year to a wider (although still well educated) lay audience.[69] The boundaries between monastic and lay (or

[65] Epiphanios, *Life*, Dressel, *Epiphanii*, 38; PG 120, 209D–212A.

[66] Athanasius, *First Letter to the Virgins*, ed. L. T. Lefort, *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte* (Leuven, 1955), 73–99; trans. D. Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 274–91, esp. 277–9.

[67] See e.g. (ps-) John of Damascus' portrayal of the Theotokos as a 'docile and obedient' young girl in his sermon on her Nativity, *On the Nativity of the Virgin* 11 (*CPG* 8060; BHG 1087); ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 181.

[68] Symeon the Metaphrast, *Life of the Virgin Mary* (BHG 1047–8; 1048a–b; CANT 93); Latyshev (ed.), *Menologii anonymi byzantini saeculi X*, vol. 2, 345–82.

[69] C. Høgel (ed.), *Metaphrasis: Redactions and Audiences in Middle Byzantine Hagiography* (Bergen: Centre for the Study of European Civilisation, 1996); S. Efthymiadis, 'Hagiography

non-monastic) readers and/or auditors must have been fluid; it is also possible that texts that were intended primarily for one of these audiences may have also have been enthusiastically received by the other – sometimes in the course of subsequent dissemination. Nevertheless, we may safely suggest a primarily monastic authorship and audience for all but the Metaphrastic *Life of the Virgin Mary* in the Middle Byzantine period. The emphasis on Mary's asceticism and spiritual attainments in these texts both revived a strand of Marian devotion that had first appeared in the fourth century, in connection with the nascent monastic movement, and contributed to her subsequent veneration in monastic centres such as Mount Athos.[70]

Conclusion

It is apparent that the late eighth- and early ninth-century priest-monk Epiphanios of Kallistratos provided a distinctive retelling of the Virgin Mary's legendary biography in his hagiographical work on this subject. Although he claimed to use reliable literary sources as a basis for his narrative, Epiphanios in fact deviated from the received tradition, as transmitted in accepted apocryphal sources such as the *Protevangelium of James* and John of Thessalonike's sermon on the Dormition of the Virgin, and elaborated in festal homilies from the early eighth century onward. The monastic writer even adjusted the accounts of the Virgin Mary that are contained in the canonical Gospels when this suited his didactic purpose – although he did not go as far in this respect as did some tenth-century hagiographers such as the anonymous author (ps-Maximos) of the Greek prototype of the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* and John Geometres. The reasons for such literary innovation, as I have argued throughout this chapter, included a desire to provide for the first time a 'historical' account of Mary's life, combined with a monastic agenda that sought to portray this holy figure as

from the "Dark Age" to the Age of Symeon Metaphrastes (Eighth–Tenth Centuries)', in S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1: *Periods and Places* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), esp. 129–30; C. Høgel, 'Symeon Metaphrastes and the Metaphrastic Movement', in S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 2: *Genres and Contexts* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 181–96.

70 The fourteenth-century *Life of St Peter the Athonite* by Gregory Palamas (BHG 1506) first records the Virgin Mary's association with the holy mountain; PG 150, 1005; K. Chryssochoidis, 'The Portaitissa Icon at Iveron Monastery and the Cult of the Virgin on Mount Athos', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 133–41.

a model of ascetic virtue. And of course the two agendas are closely related, since depicting an ideal model for monastics requires Mary to appear as a normal, 'historical', personage. The former preoccupation led Epiphanios sometimes to propose a more realistic train of events – for example, by suggesting that Joachim and Anna dedicated Mary to the Temple at the age of seven, rather than three, and that Anna moved to Jerusalem after Joachim's death in order to be close to her daughter.[71] Epiphanios' tendency to work out the ages of his subject by calculating years according to canonical and apocryphal narratives also reveals his willingness to employ literary sources with a combination of credulity and creative imagination.

If the hypothesis that the other three Byzantine *Lives of the Virgin Mary* belong to the tenth century, thus following that of Epiphanios by about a century, is correct,[72] then we see this hagiographical corpus following the lead of our monastic author in its celebration of the Virgin's historical life – both in association with her Son, Jesus Christ, and in her own right. It is likely that the acceptance and celebration of apocryphal sources in festal homilies from the seventh, but especially the eighth, century onward helped to promote hagiographical projects such as that of Epiphanios.[73] It is striking, however, that Epiphanios did not adopt the laudatory epithets and types for the Theotokos that had by this time become common in festal sermons and hymnography. The fusion of liturgical praise with hagiographical narrative was achieved a century later in the tenth-century corpus of Marian *Lives*. Epiphanios of Kallistratos' *Life of the Virgin* nevertheless offered its readers or auditors a lively and understandable, if somewhat unconventional, version of Mary's history and way of life. Although this narrative does not appear to have influenced either liturgical writers or iconographical programmes in later centuries, it enjoyed a reasonable circulation in both Byzantium and the West.[74] It is thus evident, both on the basis of this text and the other Byzantine Marian *Lives*, that medieval readers accepted – and perhaps even expected – some variation in the narratives surrounding the all-holy Panagia and Mother of God.

[71] See my n. 35.

[72] See my n. 13.

[73] M. B. Cunningham, 'The Use of the *Protevangelion of James* in Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God', in Brubaker and Cunningham, *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, 163–78; B. E. Daley (trans.), *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998), 7–10.

[74] For later Byzantine iconography of the life of the Virgin Mary, see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire byzantine et en Occident*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1992); on the dissemination of Epiphanios' *Life* in the medieval West, see Mimouni, 'Les *Vies de la Vierge*', 93–4.

15 The Story of an Edition

Antoine Wenger and John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin Mary*

FR MAXIMOS CONSTAS

John Geometres (ca. 935/40–1000) flourished in Constantinople during the second half of the tenth century, counting among his contemporaries Symeon Metaphrastes (d. ca. 1000), Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), Athanasios of Athos (ca. 925/30–ca. 1001), and Leo the Deacon (ca. 950–1000).[1] Geometres was the poet laureate of his day and a precursor of the Byzantine literary renaissance of the eleventh century.[2] His brilliant career at the imperial court came to an end when he fell out of favour under Basil II (on or around 985), after which he is said to have become a monk.[3] He henceforth devoted his considerable literary gifts to ecclesiastical poetry, biblical commentaries,[4] a *metaphrasis* of the biblical odes,[5] poems

[1] For recent biographical studies, see M. D. Lauxtermann, 'John Geometres: Poet and Soldier', *Byzantion* 68 (1998): 356–80; E. M. von Opstall, *Jean Géomètre. Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégaiques* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 3–19.

[2] According to M. D. Lauxtermann, 'Byzantine Poetry and the Paradox of Basil II's Reign', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 212: 'Whatever seems new in Mauropous, Psellos, and Christopher Mitylenaios already pre-existed, albeit *in statu nascendi,* in the poetry of Geometres.' For a catalogue of his works, see Opstall, *Jean Géomètre,* 15–17.

[3] Apparently at the monastery of Kyros in Constantinople, as suggested by his surname, Kyriotes, and the epigram he produced on the monastery's main church, which was dedicated to the Mother of God; cf. Lauxtermann, 'Poet and Soldier', 358–9; and Opstall, *Jean Géomètre,* 326–39. P. Magdalino, 'The Liturgical Poetics of an Elite Religious Confraternity', in T. Shawcross and I. Toth (eds.), *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 116–32; and P. Magdalino, 'Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos', in F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds.), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 35–6, expresses doubt that Geometres was a monk at the Theotokos tou Kyrou, but nevertheless admits that he had a clear association with that church.

[4] Around fifty excerpts attributed to Geometres are included in the *Catena on Luke* by Niketas of Heracleia, compiled ca. 1080, on which, see: C. Krikones, *Συναγωγὴ πατέρων εἰς τὸ κατὰ Λουκὰν Εὐαγγέλιον ὑπὸ Νικήτα Ἡρακλέως (κατὰ κώδικα Ἰβήρων 371)* (Thessalonike: Center for Byzantine Studies, 1976). This has led to the mistaken notion that Geometres wrote *scholia* on the Gospel of Luke (cf. Opstall, *Jean Géomètre,* 17, no. 12, and pp. 90, 92). However, the excerpts cited by Niketas are taken from Geometres' *Oration on the Annunciation* and his *Life of the Virgin Mary.* Niketas likewise included excerpts from *The Life of the Virgin* by Symeon Metaphrastes, and numerous excerpts from the genuine works of Maximos the Confessor, but there are no citations from Ps.-Maximos, *Life of the Virgin Mary.*

[5] Recently edited by M. de Groote, 'Joannes Geometres' *Metaphrasis of the Odes*: Critical Edition', *GRBS* 44 (2004): 375–410; cf. de Groote, 'The *Paraphrasis* of Joannes Geometres *Metaphrasis of the Odes*', *GRBS* 43 (2002–3): 267–304.

on various saints and icons, epigrams and *scholia* on the writings of the Church Fathers,[6] a poetical compendium of the ascetic life called 'Paradise'[7] and orations on the great feasts of the Byzantine Church, including a lengthy oration on the Annunciation.[8] Among the festal orations is a homiletic treatise written for the feast of the Dormition, which is the focus of this chapter. The work remains unpublished, except for a portion that was edited in 1955 by Antoine Wenger, whose efforts to edit the entire work will be discussed in detail below.[9]

The oration, often referred to as the *Life of the Virgin Mary*,[10] recounts the entire life of the Virgin, beginning with her ancestry and ending with her death, along with an account of the transfer of her garments to Constantinople by Galbius and Candidus during the reign of Leo I (*sed*. 457–74). The work concludes with elaborate praises and prayers of thanksgiving to Christ and the Mother of God.[11] The material is presented in chronological order and organised around the great Marian feasts of the Byzantine Church (as well as the Dominical feasts marking those events at which the Virgin was present, such as the Crucifixion). Throughout the oration, Geometres makes frequent references to 'today', 'now', 'today's feast' and the 'feast we are now

[6] Especially Gregory of Nazianzus, on whom he wrote an epigram, a panegyric and commentaries on three of his orations; cf. Opstall, *Jean Géomètre,* 17, no. 11, and pp. 148–50; and K. Demoen and E. M. van Opstall, 'One for the Road: John Geometres, Reader and Imitator of Gregory Nazianzen's Poems', in A. Schmidt (ed.), *Studia Nazianzenica*, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 223–48. For his *scholion* on John of Damascus, see R. Maisano, 'Uno scolio di Giovanni Geometra a Giovanni Damasceno', in P. Laveglia (ed.), *Studi salernitani in memoria di Raffaele Cantarella* (Salerno: University of Salerno, 1981), 493–553.

[7] Available in PG 106, 867–90; cf. P. Speck, 'Zur Datierung des sogenannten Paradeisos', *BZ* 58 (1965): 333–6; and B. Isebaert and K. Demoen, 'John Geometres and the Παράδεισος: A New Editorial Project', in W. Hörandner and M. Grünbart (eds.), *L'Épistolographie et la poésie épigrammatique: Actes de la 16e Table ronde du XXe Congrès international des études byzantines* (Paris: Collège de France, 2003), 139–51. The poems are based largely on material in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (*CPG* 5560–5615).

[8] The oration on the Annunciation is available in PG 106, 812–48. Geometres also wrote five hymns to the Virgin, which are available in PG 106, 853–68; cf. V. Laurent, 'Les poésies marials de Jean Kyriotès Géomètre', *EO* 31 (1932): 117–20; J. Sadjak, *Joannes Kyriotis Geometrae Hymni in SS. Deiparam* (Poznan: Sumptibus Societatis Litterarum Posnaniensis, 1931). While Geometres' religious writings are normally assigned to the period after his monastic tonsure, there is no reason to believe that some were not written while he was still a layman.

[9] On Wenger, cf. Albert Failler, 'Antoine Wenger (1919–2009)', *REB* 68 (2010): 321–6.

[10] As noted by M. Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge. Etude historico-doctrinale,* ST 114 (Rome: Vatican City, 1944), 317, n. 1: 'Ce discours de Jean est très long et constitue une veritable *Vie* de la Vierge.'

[11] A. Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VIe au Xe siècle. Études et documents* (Paris: Institut Français d'études byzantines, 1955), 185–201 (= commentary); 364–415 (= text, i.e. Vat. gr. 504, fols. 190^{v}–194^{v}, which Wenger collated with the work's other primary witness, the thirteenth-century codex Paris gr. 215), 394–6 (= transfer of relics); 406–14 (= prayer).

celebrating', but the sheer length of the work – which runs to nearly 50,000 words – makes it unlikely that it was actually read in its entirety at a feast or vigil of the Dormition. Instead, it may have been originally delivered in a shorter form and later revised and expanded, which might perhaps account for the author's references to his 'study' of earlier Marian literature and to his oration as a 'written' work.[12] To be sure, this hagiographical turn is consistent with literary trends in the tenth century, a period dominated by interest in the *Lives* of the saints, including heightened interest in the biography of the Mother of God.[13] Based on internal evidence, the *Life* may have been written sometime in the years 987–9.[14]

Antoine Wenger and the *Life of the Virgin*

The Greek text of John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin Mary* remains unedited, except for the final section concerning the Dormition, which was published with a French translation in 1955 by the French Assumptionist scholar Antoine Wenger (1919–2009).[15] Wenger's ongoing work on the *Life*, including his efforts to edit and translate the entire Greek text, continued to occupy him over the next thirty years. It is a story not without interest, which will be told in what follows, based on letters and documents recently found in Wenger's archive.[16]

12 Lauxtermann, 'Poet and Soldier', 363, contends that the *Life* is a collection of separate homilies on the Virgin, but this is not correct.

13 See e.g. Symeon Metaphrastes' compilation of the *Menologion*; cf. C. Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: Museum of Tusculanum Press, 2002); C. Høgel, 'Symeon Metaphrastes and the Metaphrastic Movement', in S. Efthymiades (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 2: *Genres and Contexts* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 181–208; S. C. Mimouni, *Les traditions anciennes sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de Marie* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 75, who correctly notes that the middle Byzantine *Lives* of the Virgin are a literary genre 'somewhere between hagiography and homiletics'.

14 In the *Life's* closing prayer to the Mother of God, Geometres asks for deliverance from the bloody civil wars, turmoil and horrifying events witnessed in the capital, which Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 193, suggests may be a reference to the second rebellion of Bardas Phokas, who proclaimed himself emperor and marched on Constantinople and its surrounding territories from 15 August 987 until his death on 13 April 989; cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* 10.9, trans. A.-M. Talbot and D. F. Sullivan (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), 215–17.

15 Wenger, *L'Assomption*. Wenger notes (p. 189) that Martin Jugie had 'earlier proposed to edit and publish the text, but abandoned the idea owing to more urgent projects', although Jugie did manage to produce a study of the work containing extensive extracts from it: M. Jugie, *La mort et l'Assomption*, which Wenger reviewed in *REB* 7 (1949): 244–5.

16 I am grateful to my colleague Vassa Kontouma, director of the Institut français d'études byzantines, who retrieved these items for me from Wenger's archives, housed at the Assumptionist House in Paris (Denfert-Rochereau). A debt of gratitude is owed to Sarah

For the period covering 28 July 1963 through February 1988, the archive contains forty-nine items relative to Wenger's work on Geometres, most of which are letters addressed to leading scholars and Mariologists, including François Halkin, René Laurentin, Claude Mondésert, Carlo Balic, Daniel Stiernon and Michel-Jean van Esbroeck. Other items include letters to various publishing houses (e.g. Éditions Grasset, Sources Chrétiennes, Collection Théophanie) and related institutions (the Société des Bollandistes, the Maison St. Bellarmin, the University of Louvain, the Pontifical Marian Academy and the Vatican Library). It is worth noting that, during the early part of this period, Wenger, in addition to his scholarly activities, was editor-in-chief of the prominent French Roman Catholic newspaper, *La Croix,* reporting on events taking place at the Second Vatican Council (October 1962–December 1965).[17]

In general terms, it is evident that Wenger's interest in editing the full text of the *Life of the Virgin* by John Geometres arose in the course of his earlier book on the Assumption, which contained a 26-page extract from the Greek text of the *Life*. The project, however, ran into trouble when, at some point no later than the early 1960s, Wenger became aware of the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* by Ps.-Maximos, the Greek original of which was known, he believed, to Geometres. Wenger's inability to read Georgian, along with his various other commitments (including a trip to China in 1965), at times led him to question the viability of the project, or to consider the possibility of publishing only a French translation of the *Life* based on the best Greek manuscripts. In the end, he produced a transcription of Vaticanus graecus 504 (more on which below), along with a French translation, although neither was ever published. In the early 1980s, Wenger learned that Michel-Jean van Esbroeck (1934–2003) was working on an edition of the Georgian *Life,*[18] and van Esbroeck subsequently informed Wenger that, in addition to his work on Ps.-Maximos, he was also completing work on a Greek edition of Geometres' *Life of the Virgin*. In response, Wenger surrendered

Horton, who transcribed Halkin's hand-written notes to Wenger; and to Max Ramseyer, who also translated a number of documents.

17 Wenger was the only journalist admitted to the council's sessions; cf. his *Chronique de Vatican II,* 4 vols. (Paris: Centurion, 1963–6).

18 M.-J. van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur, Vie de la Vierge,* CSCO 479, Scriptores Iberici 21–2 (Leuven: Peeters, 1986); English translation by S. J. Shoemaker, *Maximus the Confessor, The Life of the Virgin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012). Attempts by both van Esbroeck and Shoemaker to ascribe this work either to Maximos the Confessor or to the seventh century more generally have not been accepted by scholars; Shoemaker's arguments in particular have been convincingly refuted by P. Booth, 'On the Life of the Virgin Attributed to Maximus the Confessor', *JTS* 66 (2015): 149–203; cf. Shoemaker's response, 'The (Pseudo?-) Maximus Life of the Virgin and the Byzantine Marian Tradition', *JTS* 67 (2016): 115–42.

the project to van Esbroeck, who assured him that the edition would be published within two years. This is where the trail ends, since van Esbroeck, though he was to live for another eighteen years, did not publish the *Life of the Virgin* by John Geometres.

Against this general background, we may now turn to some particular items contained within the archive. In a series of eight letters written from 29 April 1965 through 16 July 1965, Wenger noted his interest in editing the *Life* by Geometres to the Bollandist scholar François Halkin (d. 1988), from whom he requested a copy of Balthasar Cordier's (d. 1650) transcription of the Greek text of the *Life* contained in Genuensis Urbani graecus 32, along with Cordier's Latin translation of the same.[19] In the meantime, Wenger wrote to the Vatican Library (6 May 1965) and ordered a photocopy of the early twelfth-century manuscript, Vaticanus graecus 504, fols. 173^v–194^v, which is the text's principal witness.[20]

On 17 May 1965, Wenger wrote to the Franciscan Mariologist Carlo Balic (d. 1977), founder and president of the Pontifical Academy of Mary, who was influential in the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption (November 1950). Wenger stated that the 'Marian theology of John Geometres is undoubtedly one of the most profound syntheses that the Christian East has left us',[21] and spoke of the need for a 'careful translation of the work', along with a commentary containing 'those Greek passages that are doctrinally significant'. Wenger therefore proposed a book of 200–500 pages for publication in Balic's 'Bibliotheca Assumptionis', containing a 50-page introduction, a detailed study of Geometres' Marian theology and an annotated French translation of the Greek text.

Shortly afterwards, on 26 May 1965, Wenger wrote to Claude Mondésert (d. 1990), a co-founder and then director of the series Sources Chrétiennes. In the course of discussing a possible edition of a Marian text by the Late

[19] Cordier's transcription and translation (= *Bibliotheca Bollandiana* 196, fols. 59–182^v) is catalogued in C. van de Vorst and H. Delehaye, *Catalogus codicum hagiographicum graecorum Germaniae, Belgii, Angliae,* Subsidia hagiographica 13 (Brussels, 1913; repr. 1968), 242, no. 2. The text of the *Life* in Genuensis Urbani gr. 32, fols. 242–309^v, dated to the fourteenth century, is catalogued in A. C. Palau, *Catalogo dei manoscritti greci della Biblioteca Franzoniana (Genova) (Urbani 21–40)* (Rome: Academia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1996), no. 29, 123–4.

[20] The manuscript has been catalogued by R. Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani Graeci*, vol. 2: *Codices 330–603* (Rome: Vatican Library, 1937), 346, no. 12. As noted by Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 186, Devreesse's catalogue entry mistakenly divides the work into two separate orations.

[21] Wenger had already said as much in *L'Assomption,* 188: 'Cette Vie de Marie mériterait grandement d' être publiée. On peut dire qu'au point de vue théologique, elle est la première synthèse mariale byzantine faite par un homme qui est aussi profound théologien qu'il est fin lettré.'

Byzantine writer Philotheos of Constantinople,[22] Wenger expressed his reservations about publishing the Greek text of the *Life of the Virgin Mary* by Geometres, but remained committed to working on a French translation with commentary. Mondésert responded on 4 June, noting that Wenger had already been at work on the *Life* for two years, adding that, if Wenger were to edit the Greek text, he would be happy to publish it in the series Sources Chrétiennes, along with Wenger's introduction, French translation and notes.

In a letter to Gérard Garitte (d. 1992), written on 18 June 1965, Wenger notes that he had become increasingly preoccupied with a comparative study of the various contemporary *Lives* of the Virgin, that is, those by Epiphanios the Monk, Symeon Metaphrastes and Ps.-Maximos, and felt that a study of these writings was necessary before continuing with the edition of Geometres. Realising that the *Life* by Ps.-Maximos was extant only in Georgian – a language Wenger was unable to read – he asked Garitte, a specialist in Georgian ecclesiastical literature, for information about the Georgian manuscripts. Garitte responded on 23 June with a detailed letter containing information about these manuscripts and related secondary studies. In July, however, Wenger's work was interrupted by a trip to China.

Upon his return, Wenger resumed work on Geometres for Sources Chrétiennes, and in May of 1966, he recruited M. L. Guillaumin (an editorial assistant at this press) to transcribe the Vatican manuscript.[23] Around the same time, Wenger had learned from Mondésert that Marcel Jacob, who two years earlier had begun work on an edition of the *Life,* had recently turned the project over to Alexis Smets. On 15 November 1966, Wenger wrote to Smets, who responded on 7 January 1967. Smets had not made significant progress on the edition – to which in any case he does not appear to have been overwhelmingly committed – and gladly relinquished any further claim to it. In addition, he provided Wenger with a copy of the Genoa manuscript.

By the end of the 1960s, Wenger had begun teaching at the Catholic University of Strasbourg (1969–73), after which he served as an Ecclesiastical Counsellor of the Embassy of France to the Vatican (1973–83). During this period, it is not clear how his work on the edition and translation was

[22] Presumably Philotheos Kokkinos, *Homily on the Dormition of the Theotokos,* ed. B. S. Psevtogas, 'Φιλοθέου Κοκκίνου πατριάρχη Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, εἰς τὴν κοίμησιν τῆς Θεοτόκου', *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρίδα Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 27 (1982): 5–130.

[23] After transcribing the first few folio pages, Guillaumin wrote to Wenger on 6 November 1966 stating that other responsibilities prevented her from any further work on the transcription.

progressing, if at all. By 1985, Wenger became aware that Michel-Jean van Esbroeck, a Belgian Bollandist and Orientalist, was working on an edition of the Georgian *Life* ascribed to Maximos the Confessor, and arranged to meet with van Esbroeck in Rome on 4 October 1985. It was then that van Esbroeck told Wenger that he too was preparing an edition of Geometres' *Life of the Virgin,* although Wenger may have already known this, since at their meeting he gave van Esbroeck his photocopy and transcription of the Vatican manuscript, along with his photocopy of the Genoa manuscript. Wenger recorded his thoughts about this meeting in a kind of diary or journal entry written later that same day. On the following day, 5 October 1985, Wenger wrote a letter to van Esbroeck, expressing his doubts about the attribution of the Georgian *Life* to Maximos the Confessor. In addition, he asked van Esbroeck to return the transcription of the Vatican manuscript (which he promised to photocopy and return) for his ongoing work on the French translation.

Van Esbroeck responded in a letter dated 19 October, but wrote mostly about his ongoing work on the Georgian text of Ps.-Maximos. It is only in the letter's final paragraph that van Esbroeck revealed that he had yet to type up the Greek text, and had not yet incorporated the variant readings from the Genoa manuscript. It seems, however, that van Esbroeck completed this task at a later point, and gave Wenger a copy of the Greek text, which is now in the Wenger archive.[24] In a statement (without addressee) written on 20 February 1988, Wenger notes that he and van Esbroeck had met earlier on that same day. According to Wenger, van Esbroeck claimed that the *Life* by Geometres was little more than a variant of the *Life* by Ps.-Maximos, but nonetheless maintained his interest in publishing the Greek text, assuring Wenger that it would appear within two years. At this, Wenger graciously, if reluctantly, renounced his claim to the project, expressing a degree of sorrow for parting company with a work that had preoccupied him for more than thirty years. However, and as stated above, at the time of his death in 2003, van Esbroeck had not realised his promise to publish the *Life of the Virgin* by John Geometres.

Early in 2012, Mary Cunningham became interested in the *Life*, and began working with Vaticanus graecus 504. Not long afterwards, she kindly invited the present writer to take over the project. After collecting the manuscripts and collating about half of the text (a task made necessary by

[24] That is, a typed collation of Vaticanus graecus 504, and Genuensis urbani 32 (see my nn. 19–20), up to the account of the Dormition, which had already been edited by Wenger. The Paris manuscript was not included in this collation, although van Esbroeck may have planned to incorporate its variant readings at a later date.

various problems and inadequacies in the Greek text established by van Esbroeck), I invited Christos Simelidis to collaborate with me as co-editor, and I am thankful for his help in the preparation of this chapter. Our aim is to produce a critical edition of the Greek text, along with an English translation, introduction and commentary.

John Geometres and the Theotokos: Theological Considerations

The *Life of the Virgin* by John Geometres is considered a long missing critical piece in a larger puzzle connecting early Marian writings – e.g. the *Protoevangelium* and the *Transitus Mariae* literature – with later works such as the *Life of the Virgin* by Epiphanios of Kallistratos (written towards the end of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century),[25] the ninth-century sermons of George of Nikomedia (active after ca. 860),[26] the tenth-century *Life of the Virgin* by Symeon Metaphrastes (ca. 976–87)[27] and the *Life of the Virgin* mistakenly attributed to Maximos the Confessor. This latter work was almost certainly written, not in the seventh century, but in the Middle Byzantine period, in close proximity to the *Lives* by Geometres and Metaphrastes, and all three share a number of common elements. One is therefore justified in asking what factors encouraged the production of these *Lives* at more or less the same time.

It seems to me that two factors merit particular attention: heightened interest in hagiography, and heightened interest in the Mother of God, both of which were characteristic features of the post-Iconoclastic period. Renewed and indeed systematic interest in the *Lives* of the saints was part of the larger response to Iconoclasm, a movement that sought to suppress and destroy the theoretical and material culture of devotion to the saints.[28]

[25] Edited by A. Dressel, *Epiphanii monachi et presbyter edita et inedita* (Paris and Leipzig: Brockhaus and Avenarius, 1843), 13–44; and also available (in a slightly different recension) in PG 120, 186–216. See Mary Cunningham's chapter on this text in the present volume.

[26] George's Marian homilies are available in PG 100, 1336–1504.

[27] Symeon's *Life of the Virgin* has been edited by V. V. Latyshev, *Menologii anonymi byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt fragmenta*, vol. 2 (St Petersburg: Nauk, 1912; repr. Leipzig, 1970), 345–83. The *Lament of the Theotokos* ascribed to Symeon (PG 114, 209–17) is the work of the twelfth-century writer Nikephoros Basilakes; for critical editions of the Greek text, see W. Hörander, *Der Prosarhythmus in der rhetorischen Literatur der Byzantiner* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 98–104; A. Pignani, *Niceforo Basilace, Progimnasmi e monodie* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1983), 169–80.

[28] On which, see N. Ševčenko, 'Canon and Calendar: The Role of a Ninth-Century Hymnographer in Shaping the Celebration of the Saints', in Leslie Brubaker (ed.), *Byzantium*

Moreover, inasmuch as iconophile thinking had granted the Mother of God a central place in Christian theology and devotion, promoted through a growing cycle of Marian feasts, it is not surprising that orthodox believers became increasingly curious about the details of her life, which could only be satisfied by the kind of large-scale biographies mentioned above.

In addition to these factors, it is important to remember that Iconoclasm was not simply a debate about art, but a controversy concerning the nature and consequences of the incarnation, and thus it was an extension of the Christological controversy into the domain of art. In keeping with the new Christology, the iconography that was developed in the wake of the Council of Nicaea (787) and the Restoration of Icons (Constantinople, 843) highlighted the Virgin's maternal relationship to her child, which visually proclaimed the new emphasis on the physical and spiritual connections between the incarnate Word and his Mother.[29] The icon of Mother and Child, together with the icon of Christ, would henceforth forever remain united as a single confession of faith in the incarnation.[30] And in response to those who sought to remove the image of the Mother of God from the eyes and minds of the faithful, and to ban her honour and veneration in the liturgy,[31] orthodox writers and artists lavishly praised her in richly

in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive? (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 101–14, esp. p. 113; repr. in N. Ševčenko, *The Celebration of the Saints in Byzantine Art and Liturgy* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013). The same rise of interest in devotion to the saints is evident in the iconography of post-Iconoclastic lead seals; on which, see: J. Cotsonis, 'The Contribution of Byzantine Lead Seals to the Study of the Cult of the Saints (6th–12th Centuries)', *Byzantion* 75 (2005): 383–497.

[29] Cf. I. Kalavrezou, 'Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became *Meter Theou*', *DOP* 44 (1990): 165–72; N. Tsironis, 'The Mother of God in the Iconoclastic Controversy', in M. Vassilaki (ed.), *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens: Benaki Museum, 1999), 27–39; M. Vassilaki and N. Tsironis, 'Representations of the Virgin and the Association with the Passion of Christ', in *Mother of God*, 456: 'The direct association of the Virgin with the Restoration of Icons demonstrates the manner in which she represented and embodied iconophile arguments about and beliefs in the Incarnation.'

[30] Already the second Council of Nicaea affirmed: 'We embrace the words of the Lord, the apostles, and the prophets, through which we have been taught to praise and magnify above all she who is literally and truly the Theotokos' (*ACO* 2.3.2, 484, ll. 25–7). See also the kontakion for the Feast of Orthodoxy, which proclaims: 'The uncircumscribable Word of the Father was circumscribed becoming flesh through you, Theotokos'. *Triodion* (Athens: Apostolike Diakonia, 2003), 309–10. This principle had already been stated by Germanos of Constantinople in his *Letter to John of Synada:* 'In the same manner we depict the likeness of His all-pure Mother, showing that, while she was a woman according to nature … she nonetheless conceived the invisible God in her womb' (PG 98, 157D–161C).

[31] According to the ninth-century writer George the Monk (Hamartolos)'s *Chronicle* 2.16, Constantine V, in addition to denying the intercessory power of the saints, had forbidden calling the Virgin 'Theotokos', likewise rejecting her capacity as an intercessor and mediator: μηδὲ τῆς Μαρίας ἐπικαλείσθω τις πρεσβείαν, οὐ γὰρ δύναται βοηθεῖν τινι,

articulated literary and visual portraits. From this point of view, the *Lives* can be seen as prose versions of Marian iconographic cycles, which from the tenth and eleventh centuries would increasingly adorn the walls of Byzantine churches.[32]

I would further argue that interest in the Virgin's genealogy, which is another prominent feature of the *Lives,* should also be seen in light of the peculiarly iconophile notion of the incarnation.[33] The genealogies are not attempts to ennoble Mary as an isolated individual by providing her with a Davidic pedigree, but rather to exalt her as the prototype and consummation of human nature assumed by the Word of God. Seen in this way, the genealogy is simply another witness to and safeguard of the historical reality of the incarnation.[34] Geometres states that the Virgin's ancestry 'contributes to, and is by no means insignificant for her future conception and the divine economy of salvation', and that the 'weaving together of the priestly and royal lines' was a kind of 'universal blending' from which would arise, 'not merely one who was priest and king, but God and man'.[35]

Similarly, the pronounced emphasis that the *Lives* place on the Virgin's suffering, especially at the time of the passion and crucifixion, is yet another theme characteristic of post-Iconoclastic theology.[36] As has been

μηδ᾽ αὖ πάλιν Θεοτόκον αὐτὴν ὀνομαζέσθω (ed. C. de Boor, *Georgii Monachi Chronicon* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904; repr. 1978), 2.751, ll. 8–10).

32 While abbreviated Marian iconographic cycles based on the *Protevangelium* appear already in the fifth century, systematic cycles appear only in the tenth century, coinciding with the appearance of the *Lives*; cf. X. Jacob, 'La vie de Marie interpretée par les artistes des églises rupestres de Cappadoce', *Cahiers de l'art medieval* 6 (1971–3): 15–30. These same factors may also account for the detailed physical and especially physiognomic descriptions of Christ and the Virgin found in the *Lives,* e.g. Epiphanios the Monk, *Life of the Virgin* (Dressel, 18, 29; PG 120, 192C–193B; 204C).

33 Cf. Epiphanios, *Life of the Virgin* 2 (Dressel, 15–16; PG 120, 189A–192A); Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* 3 (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 173r); Ps.-Maximos, *Life of the Virgin* 3.

34 A. D. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 191–203, similarly notes that the inclusion of David and Solomon in the iconography of the resurrection was understood as a 'reference to the incarnation of the Logos through the Virgin' through a 'pictorial shorthand for Davidic ancestry', affirming that the 'royal house of David is the vehicle of the incarnation', offering 'material proof of the humanity of Christ' and making the grouping of figures a kind of 'family portrait'. Kartsonis also notes that this iconography was 'widespread throughout the Macedonian period', i.e., during the lifetime of Geometres.

35 Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 173r); cf. Ps.-Maximos, *Life of the Virgin* 3. On this point, the *Lives* are faithful to the genealogies of Mt 1:1–17 and Lk 3:23–38, which likewise proclaim a Davidic ancestry for Jesus, which is affirmed in Rom 1:3 and 2 Tim 2:8, assumed in Mk 10:48 and implied in Acts 2:30 and Heb 7:14, all of which aim to highlight Christ's relation to both God and humanity.

36 Cf. Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* (Vat. gr. 504, fols. 184r–86v); Ps.-Maximos, *Life of the Virgin* 80–1; Symeon Metaphrastes, *Life of the Virgin* (ed. Latyschev, 357, 363, 366–7); George of Nikomedia, *Homily on the Mother of God at the Cross* (PG 100, 1457A–1489D); George of

well established, iconophile theologians emphasised the sufferings of Christ as a way to demonstrate the reality of his humanity, which led to a corresponding emphasis on the sufferings of his mother, who was the source of his humanity.[37] This theme is already prominent in the ninth-century *stavrotheotokia* of Joseph the Hymnographer, extends through the tenth-century *Lives* of the Virgin, is evident in the great Marian iconography of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and was popularised in the Holy Friday Lamentations of the late Byzantine period.[38] The suffering of the human Mother was, as it were, a mirror magnifying the suffering of her divine-human Son, and in which the emotional and psychological aspects of divine suffering could be explored and amplified without compromising the doctrine of divine impassibility. It follows that the post-Iconoclastic emphasis on the suffering of the Mother of God cannot be reduced simply to a species of 'affective piety'. In Byzantine theology, 'suffering' (πάθος, τὸ παθητόν) signifies 'passivity' and denotes the universal potential of human nature – exemplified by the Mother of God at the time of the incarnation and crucifixion, and indeed throughout her whole life – to 'suffer the divine'.[39] The resulting 'identity in suffering' between Mother and Child has often been misunderstood as making Mary a 'co-redeemer' with Christ, or ontologically elevating her into a 'semi-divine being'.[40] However it is

Nikomedia, *Homily on the Mother of God at the Tomb of Christ* (PG 100, 1489D–1504D); the anonymous *Christus patiens* (SC 149); and Nikephoros Basilakes, *The Lament of the Theotokos*. The *Life* by Epiphanios does not emphasise the Virgin's suffering.

37 This was a theological strategy used against the anti-Chalcedonians; cf. Anastasios of Sinai, *Hodegos* 12.1 (CCSG 8:201–2); see also Vassilaki and Tsironis, 'Representations of the Virgin'; M. Constas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Alhambra: Sebastian Press, 2014), 100–8, 121–8.

38 On which, see M. Constas, 'Painting and Poetry in the Middle Byzantine Period: A Bilateral Icon from Kastoria and the *Stavrotheotokia* of Joseph the Hymnographer', in S. E. J. Gerstel (ed.), *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016): 12–32; and Constas, *Art of Seeing,* 121–6.

39 On the fundamental place of passivity/suffering in the soul's union with God, see Maximos the Confessor, *Amb.* 7.11–12; *Amb.* 20.2 (DOML 1:89–92; 409–11); and Maximos, *Questions to Thalassios* 22 (CCSG 7:137–43). For discussion, see A. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 144–64, 248–9; P. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 206–11; Constas, *Art of Seeing,* 124–8.

40 See e.g. J. Galot, 'La plus ancienne affirmation de la corédemption mariale: Le témoignage de Jean le Géomètre', *Recherches des science religieuse* 45 (1957): 187–208; H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964), 199. While some Roman Catholic theologians carefully qualify Mary's *participation* in the divine economy of salvation (which began with her assent to become the Mother of God), the notion that 'Mary's intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that was not only a proof of her unshakeable faith, but also a contribution to the Redemption of all, and were mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world' (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic

simply an extension of the logic of participation in the sufferings of Christ adumbrated in the New Testament (cf. 2 Cor 4:10; Col 1:24; 1 Pet 4:13), culminating in the Christomimetic martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7), and continued in the *Passions* of the early martyrs. The participation of the saints in the sufferings of Christ is a mode of their assimilation to God, which is a central feature of Orthodox anthropology and soteriology. In the case of the Mother of God, the 'imitation of Christ' is a question of degree, not kind.[41]

While the Middle Byzantine *Lives* of the Virgin are ostensibly works of history or hagiography, those by Ps.-Maximos and John Geometres are impressive for their strong theological content. To be sure, Epiphanios of Kallistratos intentionally set out to produce a more 'historical' account, citing and critiquing his sources, from which, he tells us, he took only what was 'certain and true'.[42] Geometres, on the other hand, whose work closely mirrors that by Ps.-Maximos, is more theologian than historian. He is not content simply to recount the facts of the Virgin's life, but expands on those facts exegetically and theologically, aided by his superior gifts as a writer and poet. If Epiphanios detailed the outward, historical events comprising the life of the Virgin, then Ps.-Maximos and Geometres can be said to have provided those events with extended spiritual and theological interpretations (in addition to expanding the historical narrative itself). Ps.-Maximos may have been the first to undertake the task of expansion and interpretation, followed by Geometres, who went beyond Ps.-Maximos, not only in terms of language and rhetoric, but also theologically, either by

Letter, *Salvifici Doloris* 25), makes the redemptive work of Christ contingent on the emotional response of a human being, and as such has no parallel in Byzantine theological thought.

41 See Maximos, *Amb.* 21.14–15 (DOML 1:441–5). The word 'Theotokos' already presupposes a *communicatio idiomatum* or reciprocity between the human and the divine, a concept Maximos extended to include the saints, so that the term perichoresis came to mean the permeation of divine properties into human life and experience, which is the aim of the divine economy of salvation; for discussion, see L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 22–36.

42 Epiphanios, *Life of the Virgin* (Dressel, 13–14; PG 120, 185–8). At the close of his survey, Epiphanios admits to having used apocryphal works composed by heretics, but justifies such usage by citing Basil, *Homily on the Nativity of Christ* (PG 31, 1469): 'The magi, who were of a race foreign to the covenants of God, were the first to be reckoned worthy of worshipping Christ, because the testimonies of enemies are more trustworthy' (Dressel, 14; PG 120, 188B). Ps.-Maximos (followed by Symeon Metaphrastes) makes the same argument, but cites Gregory of Nyssa: 'And if we say some things from the apocryphal writings, this is true and without error, and it is what has been accepted and confirmed by the above-mentioned Fathers. For so the blessed Gregory of Nyssa says, "I have read in an apocryphal book that the father of the all-holy Virgin Mary was reknowned for his observance of the Law and was famous for his charity"' (trans. Shoemaker, 38, citing Gregory of Nyssa, *Homily on the Nativity* (GNO 10.2/3, p. 252, ll. 1–2)); cf. Symeon, *Life of the Virgin* (Lyshatev, 348, ll. 4–7).

elaborating on the theological themes that are also found in Ps.-Maximos, or by introducing new theological themes and images. A comparison of their respective treatments of the Virgin's Entry into the Temple will serve to make this clear.[43]

Ps.-Maximos recounts the traditional narrative of the Entry, describing the Virgin's parents taking her to the Temple at the age of three, and dedicating her as an offering to God.[44] At the moment of the Virgin's actual entrance into the Temple, he notes that she is escorted by other virgins, who 'went before her with lamps'. These virgin escorts are not mentioned by Epiphanios, although they appear in the *Protevangelium* (7.4–5), and in the homilies on the Entry by Germanos and Tarasios, who identify them with the virgins mentioned in Psalm 44:15: 'Virgins shall be brought to the King after her; her companions shall be brought to You.'[45] Ps.-Maximos likewise associates the virgin escorts with Psalm 44:3–14, which he provides with an extensive Marian exegesis.[46] His interpretation of these verses enables him to fill out the narrative with a number of details. For example, he believes that the verse, 'the queen stood at your right' (Ps 44:10), was a prophecy 'foretelling her location to the right of the altar in the Holy of Holies'.[47] Ps.-Maximos is aware that earlier writers interpreted the 'queen' and 'daughter' of Psalm 44 as referring to the Church, and not to the Virgin. The Marian interpretation, however, increasingly came to predominate, and Ps.-Maximos would seem to mark an important stage in this process.[48]

[43] The origins of the feast of the Entry remain obscure, although it was well established by or shortly after the time of Germanos of Constantinople (sed. 715–30). The feast was subsequently promoted by iconophile preachers and theologians, including Tarasios of Constantinople, who presided over the Seventh Ecumenical council in 787, and whose homily on the Entry is a masterpiece of iconophile Marian theology (PG 98, 1481–1500); cf. M. B. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven: Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2008), 24–6.

[44] Ps.-Maximos, *Life of the Virgin* 5.

[45] Germanos, *On the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple* 1.5–6 (trans. Cunningham, *Wider than Heaven*, 150–2); Tarasios, *On the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple* (PG 98, 1481B; 1488CD). Note that in two ninth-century illuminated Psalters, whose iconographic programs constitute a sustained polemic against the iconoclasts, Psalm 44 is illustrated by an image of the Annunciation, flanked by the psalmist David (cf. my n. 33); for discussion, see K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 64–5, and fig. 72. I am thankful to Joachim Cotsonis for this reference.

[46] Ps.-Maximos, *Life of the Virgin* 5–9.

[47] Ibid., 7.

[48] Ibid., 6: 'And even if some have interpreted these words as being about the Church, there is nevertheless nothing that impedes understanding them as being about the holy Theotokos' (trans. Shoemaker, 41). Among those patristic writers who interpret the psalm as a type of the Church are: Clement, *Strom*. 6.11.92.1 (GCS 2, 478); Origen, *Commentary on John* 1.284 (SC 120, 204); Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms* (PG 23, 401); Athanasius, *Expositions on the Psalms* (PG 27, 212); Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Adoration and Worship of God in Spirit and*

Turning now to John Geometres, it is clear that, apart from some significant differences, his work closely parallels the account of the Entry found in Ps.-Maximos, including the Marian exegesis of Psalm 44. Having interpreted the Psalm, however, he embarks on a lengthy digression, which he announces to his audience:

> Rather than omit anything of seemingly minor importance concerning the Mother of God, and so appear to be doing major harm to those who love her and her beauty, I will not at this juncture overlook what is timely and appropriate to say. Let us hear, then, from the apocryphal writings, and from the gleanings of others, because those who love their sovereigns are not interested merely in extensive coverage of the great things concerning them, but even in things that are seemingly small.[49]

The 'seemingly small things' that Geometres proposes to discuss will occupy him at considerable length, introducing material that is not found in Ps.-Maximos, and doubling the length of his treatment of the Entry. His aim is to address the inner qualities of the Virgin, that is, her 'interior beauty and the whole disposition of her spirit', which make her a 'rule or standard for all human nature'. In what must be a reference to the 'apocryphal' sources he mentioned at the outset, he subsequently alludes to an analogy between the formation of Eve's body and the formation of Mary's soul,[50] but admits that the topic is 'beyond reason and speech', and consequently sets it aside.[51]

Continuing with a description of the Virgin's virtuous qualities, Geometres lists eleven superlatives, the last two of which, namely, 'most skilful and industrious' (εὐτεχνοτάτη καὶ φιλεργοτάτη), he associates with the 'virtuous wife' of Proverbs, a type of the Virgin whom Solomon 'praised from afar'. Whereas Ps.-Maximos cites Proverbs 31:25–6, 29, he uses these three verses merely to refer to the Virgin's 'cleverness in speech', her being 'clothed in beauty' and the surpassing nature of her 'knowledge'. The 'virtuous wife' (Prov 31:10) as such is not mentioned or cited, and neither is her skill at 'spinning and weaving', which is a notable feature of the biblical text (Prov 31:13, 19, 22, 24). This omission is significant, since the Virgin's

Truth (PG 68, 137; 633); and Basil of Caesarea, *On the Psalms* (PG 29, 408). Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* (PG 27, 16; cf. PG 27, 565) understands the psalm to refer to the Mother of God, but the wider reception of this interpretation is not evident until ps-Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Homily on the Annunciation* (PG 10, 1153), written in the late sixth century, and ps-Athanasius, *Homily on the Annunciation* (PG 28, 937), written in the seventh or eighth century. The association of the psalm with ascetic virgins likely served as a transition from the ecclesial to the Marian interpretation; cf. John Chrysostom, *On Virginity* 6.2 (SC 125, 110, ll. 21–4).

49 John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 174^r).

50 Although this may also be a reference to the Virgin's work of spinning thread, noted below.

51 John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 175r).

handwork was a key symbolic attribute of the Theotokos in the Late Antique and Byzantine tradition.[52]

Geometres, on the other hand, offers a verse-by-verse commentary on the whole of Proverbs 31:10–31, relating the external activities of the proverbial good wife to the inner life of the Mother of God.[53] Her work with 'wool and flax' (Prov 31:13), for example, signifies reflection on the 'coarser, if pure, thoughts concerning the practical life, and the more subtle thoughts concerning contemplation'.[54] That she 'arises at night and provides food for her household' (Prov 31:15) indicates her impartation of 'nourishing and contemplative thoughts to the house of her soul'. That 'her lamp does not go out at night' (Prov 31:18) refers to the 'illumination of her intellect, or the principle that fulfils the law, since the law is a lamp and a light'. The 'hands' that she 'puts to the distaff' (Prov 31:19) symbolise the 'practical power of the soul', by which she 'weaves together a garment of virtue and the clothing of faith',[55] and so on through the rest of the chapter.

Geometres' allegorical exegesis of the virtuous wife described in Proverbs is largely indebted to ascetic writers such as Evagrius of Pontus and Maximos the Confessor, in particular to Evagrius' *Scholia on Proverbs*. For Evagrius, the proverbial wife personifies the ascetic soul or intellect engaged in a range of practical and contemplative activities, an interpretation that finds linguistic and conceptual parallels in Geometres. For instance, the 'gathering of wool and flax', according to Evagrius, is 'meditation on the principles of animate and inanimate beings', or 'practical and natural principles'. Her 'lamp' is a 'pure intellect filled with contemplation'. Her 'spindle' symbolises the purified intellect, which 'weaves together virtue with virtue', or perhaps is a 'spoken word drawing out contemplation from the intellect'.[56] The 'garments' she fashions are the 'virtues and contemplations by which the intellect is adorned'.[57] That the 'hand' symbolises the 'activity of the practical life' is a trope common to Evagrius and Maximos.[58]

[52] See below, n. 59.

[53] Epiphanios, *Life of the Virgin,* emphasises Mary's work spinning thread, noting that her handwork with wool, linen and silk and purple dyed cloth was admired by all, and that in wisdom and understanding she was superior to all women of her generation, so that Solomon's words truly apply to her: 'A virtuous woman is hard to find' (Prov 31:10) (Dressel, 17; PG 120, 192C).

[54] John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 175^{r}).

[55] Ibid.

[56] Cf. the parallel formulation in Clement, *Paed* 3.10.49.5 l. 3.

[57] Evagrius, *Scholia on Proverbs* (SC 340, 462–72). Many of these same *scholia* were excerpted in Prokopios of Gaza, *Catena on Proverbs* (*CPG* 7432), where Geometres could have had easy access to them.

[58] Cf. Evagrius, *Scholia on Proverbs* 203: 'The practical virtues correspond to the hands' (SC 340, 298); *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* 26: 'The hands are a symbol of practical activity' (SC 397, 102);

Again, it is striking that Ps.-Maximos makes no mention of the Virgin's spinning of thread, which figures prominently in the *Protevangelium* (10.1–8; 11.4), and, from the fifth century, was a popular theme in homiletical literature and iconography. According to the *Protevangelium,* Mary was spinning purple thread for the veil of the sanctuary when she was approached by the archangel Gabriel (cf. Lk 1:28). In the New Testament, the flesh of Christ – as if it were a sacred curtain concealing his divinity – is directly identified with the veil of the sanctuary (Heb 10:20), and this was undoubtedly the source of the symbolism for the *Protevangelium*. The logic of the apocryphal Gospel is elegant: if Christ's flesh was derived exclusively from his mother, then the veil symbolising that flesh can have been woven by no one but her, and thus Mary's distaff and thread became symbols of Christ's virginal conception and birth.[59]

Through a rhetorical *inclusio,* repeating the same language he used to open this digression, Geometres brings the digression to a close. As he returns to the place where Ps.-Maximos left off, he signals his return, saying: 'Even though these things were uttered by way of a digression, they are by no means lacking in pleasure and benefits for those who are more diligent in their learning and lovers of beauty.'[60]

Conclusion

Together with the *Lives* of the Virgin by Epiphanios of Kallistratos, Ps.-Maximos and Symeon Metaphrastes, the *Life of the Virgin* by John Geometres is an important volume in the Middle Byzantine library of Marian hagiography. Written by an outstanding poet, and reflecting the hagiographical interests and doctrinal concerns of the post-Iconoclastic period, the *Life* is a masterpiece of Byzantine rhetoric, devotion and theology. Although it is based on the *Life* by Epiphanios, and closely mirrors the *Life* by Ps.-Maximos, van Esbroeck's opinion that the work is merely a variant of Ps.-Maximos is incorrect, as the comparison of their respective treatments of

Maximos, *Amb*. 48.5: 'The hands (of Christ the Lamb) shall be partaken of by those who carry out the work of the commandments' (DOML 2, 219); *Questions to Thalassios* 37.4: 'The hand is the activity of the intellect as it gropes for things in contemplation' (CCSG 7, 251); *Questions and Doubts* 1.68: 'The hands are admittedly symbols of practice and activity' (CCSG 10, 165).

59 For further discussion, see: N. Constas, 'Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the Loom of the Flesh', *JECS* 3 (1995): 169–94; Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 315–58.

60 John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* (Vat. gr. 504, fol. 175^{v}).

the Virgin's Entry into the Temple makes clear. The importance of the *Life,* recognised more than half a century ago by Antoine Wenger, will be fully appreciated only when a critical edition of the text, along with a translation, is made available to interested readers.

Postscript: As this book was going to press, research conducted by my collaborator, Christos Simelidis, revealed that the *Life of the Virgin* by John Geometres was almost certainly the source text adapted and translated into Georgian by Euthymios the Translator, who ascribed the work to Maximos the Confessor. These arguments will be presented in detail in our forthcoming edition and translation of Geometres' *Life of the Virgin* (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library).

Afterword

SUSAN ASHBROOK HARVEY

The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images asks us to look at Byzantine devotion to the Virgin Mary through the guidance of two lenses. The first is an historical arc that draws our attention through the explosive Marian piety of the Early Christian centuries to the Middle Byzantine period, the eighth through twelfth centuries, a time of consolidation as well as dynamic recasting. Second is the focus on Marian narratives, the distinctive penchant for thinking about Mary biographically that preoccupied many Byzantine authors and artists of the era. The Middle Byzantine period was a time of inheriting – or receiving – the cult of the Virgin Mary as it had developed in the Early Christian centuries. It was an era of drawing together the wealth of that inheritance: the widespread and varied devotional practices, extracanonical stories beyond the New Testament, elaborate liturgical expansions and sophisticated doctrinal statements that the first sections of this volume amply delineate. Throughout the volume, attention focuses on texts and images that have thus far received little if any scholarly consideration; this points to narrativity as the underlying technique for bringing the profusion of this rich but rather unruly devotional growth into a more coherently conceptualised whole. What do we learn from this dual vantage point?

The desire to imagine Mary's story precisely *as* a story – as narrative – is apparent in the wide array of media and modes of expression here discussed. What could a story express, as opposed to a figural portrait? What qualities are carried by the linearity, plot, sequence and exposition required by narrative form, whether textual or visual, whether read, sung, chanted, heard, touched, embraced or viewed? And how was narrative conveyed through non-textual articulation? In a fundamental sense, narrative provided a technique for relationality: narrative related and interwove the different aspects of Marian devotion so that they could be conceptually perceived as parts of a whole; and narrative enabled relationship between Mary's story and the life (and story) of the faithful devotee.

Stories of Mary expressed more than an exploration of her, however such exploration was conceived (her life, her character, her roles, her meanings). Stories of Mary were also stories of Mary's continuing presence among

her faithful. For that is what we see in these essays: repeatedly, Byzantine religious expression displayed an unshakeable conviction that Mary was engaged and active in the lives of her devotees. Mary's story was a continuing narrative for the Byzantines: a biography to be grasped, delineated and elaborated, certainly, but also an ongoing story in which her devotees participated. The Middle Byzantine focus on Mary's life, narratively expressed, in no way confined her story to the historical past (as we might think biography, as a literary genre, conveys today). Rather, it cultivated the vivid Byzantine conviction that Marian presence was always and continuously active in the present.

Different forms of narrative performed their work with different affect and implications: homilies, art and hymnography all engaged and instructed the devotee in distinctive ways. The Middle Byzantine period brought the establishment of formal Marian festivals as distinct from Dominical feasts for Christ. These required expanded and expansive narratives, and also generated them. So deeply embedded in Byzantine culture did a biographical devotion to Mary become, that we would do better to term the basic sources 'extracanonical' than 'apocryphal'. There was nothing 'secret' or 'hidden' about the stories of Mary's birth and childhood from the *Protevangelium of James*, or the remembrance of her death in the Dormition (*Koimesis*) accounts that began to appear in late antiquity. No Byzantine would have realised, let alone cared, that these stories were missing from the canonical New Testament. Their affirmation was everywhere present, whether officially through the ecclesiastical calendar or particular churches, relics or shrines; or as continually legitimated by representation, exploration and retelling through various media.

Notable in these essays is the strong evidence of the Virgin Mary's significance in her own right already from the Early Christian period. She was not invariably and not necessarily venerated in relation to her Son, as a subsidiary character in *his* story, although that larger soteriological frame was never far from view. But texts and visual art alike cultivated a direct relationship between Mary and her devotees, one which the worshipper experienced with constancy, intimacy and trust.

It was that relationship which helps us to understand that Byzantine Christians did not share the concerns of modern scholars regarding the coherence or intelligibility of imagery in texts or in visual arts. Scholars appreciate the complex, sometimes esoteric allusions, intersections and correspondences in Marian imagery and themes that characterise her depiction in art and verse. The profundity of such presentation is well apparent in the chapters here, especially those by Evangelatou, Arentzen,

Olkinuora, Krueger and Iverites. Yet people did not have to understand the sophisticated layering of biblical and theological nuances. The depiction could be meaningful nonetheless. It was sufficient to recognise images, themes, melodies and stories, all of which were much beloved precisely because they were familiar. The believer could rejoice in that familiarity and delight in that recognition. There was, moreover, profound appreciation for the plenitude of Marian imagery, its seemingly infinite variety and quantity. The constant background of narrative thinking about Mary helped to maintain a sense of interconnection between the diverse threads of imagery; that larger frame evoked a sufficient sense of coherence. It mattered only that Mary was celebrated by every means. Byzantium presented no trajectory of rise and fall for Marian devotion. One might rather argue for a continuing upward spiral.

What does this volume teach us about narrative as a medium for devotion? Already in Early Byzantium, narrative could forge a bridge from sacred story to the life and reality of the believer. Objects decorated with Mary's story were common in Early Christian art, as Maria Lidova argues, in forms that indicate mass production (in the case of textiles, medallions, reliquaries), and constant, ordinary usage, as Andrea Olsen Lam demonstrates through Marian imagery on devotional objects and amulets related to marriage, fertility and childbirth. Such evidence attests devotional practices flourishing well before the early fifth-century Christological battles that scholars have often thought to be the turning point for a rise in Marian veneration. These concrete, material forms of piety blurred the categories of didactic, supplicatory or apotropaic uses; 'magic' as opposed to religion can scarcely be differentiated.

Stephen Shoemaker suggests that the growing exaltation of Mary in Late Antique orthodoxy itself may have yielded possible (mis)understandings of Mary as a divine figure rather than human. Heretical thinking was not necessarily the source of such 'hyper-devotion'. We might rather understand biographical narrative as a means to curb such excess and emphasise Mary's complete humanity. Biography that extended to Mary's death offered correction, at the same time that it might yield interest in exploration of Mary's relation to her own mother, as Eirini Panou offers us. Extension in either direction – birth and childhood, or death and assumption (Dell'Acqua) – deflected Mary's story away from the New Testament focus on Christ and further enhanced Mary's singularity, even while offering resonance, again, with people's own lives.

Narrative might also, as Georgia Frank illustrates, be expressed in dialogical form, both literary and performative. Byzantine hymnography

accorded Mary lengthy speeches to elaborate the biblical accounts. At the same time, it offered the congregation the pleasure of joining their voices with hers in the multipurpose refrains, for example that punctuated the poetic presentations of Romanos the Melode. Affect elicited emotional response, compelling the characters in the story towards their purpose at the same time that it shaped and guided the emotions of the faithful as they listened and sang their responses. Mary as a present and active reality in the believer's life also meant that recurring images were constantly renewed in their meanings. Imperial imagery (Arentzen), or images of Mary as place or force (Krueger), or the exaltation of Mary as proof and guardian of true orthodoxy (Iverites) all shifted in valance or sense over time, yet remained ever potent, even relevant, because their meaning was seen invariably to speak to the present moment. By these diverse means – objects, texts, hymns – Christians engaged Mary as one active in the events and needs of their own lives.

Focus on narrative also sets into high relief the specifically monastic context for many of the texts and images here discussed (Olkinuora, Iverites, Cunningham and Constas). Middle Byzantine narratives added into Mary's story an emphasis on the ascetic aspects of her life: her secluded life in the Temple as a young girl, her disciplined prayer life, her devotion to reading and study of scripture. In these narrative biographies, practices of prayer and study also characterised her life after Christ's resurrection and prior to her own death. Such emphasis on *askesis* deflected attention from miracles or visions, the often unstated yet desired hope for those who wore her amulets or carried pilgrimage tokens from her shrines. Yet monastic devotion could be every bit as elaborate as that of the lay public (Iverites, Constas). By such differing narrative strategies, Marian devotion was rendered suitable for both monastic and lay audiences. More than suitable, it became constant, fervent and profound, regardless of social context. As Elizabeth Jeffreys illustrates, Marian narrative could also provide fitting effort for the elite intelligentsia. In their case, her story could be told through complicated borrowings, sometimes cento-like, from theological works perhaps unrelated to her in any overt way. Mary's story could continue to expand. Its narration could redefine the sacred spaces of ecclesiastical architecture and the liturgical events housed in such spaces (Brubaker), or the festal associations of music in the auditory dialogue of antiphonal and responsorial singing (Olkinuora).

The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium follows upon two decades of energetic, even exuberant scholarship on Marian devotion in the Byzantine Empire. The book forms the third of a collection, rounding out the earlier

ground-breaking work of *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images*, edited by Leslie Brubaker and Mary B. Cunningham (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), and *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, edited by Maria Vassilaki (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), the latter itself a response to the splendid exhibit catalogued in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, also edited by Maria Vassilaki (Athens and Milan: Skira, 2000). These collections offer fitting measure of the contributions Byzantinists can make to a boom in Marian studies that has reverberated across scholarship on Christianity of other eras and settings in recent years.[1] Each of these Byzantine volumes has raised significant questions and presented important new, previously unstudied (or seriously understudied) evidence, whether textual, visual, liturgical, material or documentary.

The scholarly shift prompting this new dynamism in the study of the Virgin Mary has been the decisive evidence that history of doctrine provides a partial, less than adequate means for approaching Mary within the study of Christianity. Instead, scholars have turned towards Marian piety as expressed and performed in religion, culture, society and politics. 'Official' theology, bounded by ecclesiastical decisions or institutional definitions of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, provides thin access to the densely textured world of devotion.[2] An emphasis on piety – on the practices by and through which devotion to Mary has been articulated – opens a vast arena of activity. As the present volume and its two predecessors have plainly demonstrated, the ramifications for the study of Byzantium are significant. The elusive figure of Mary in the canonical New Testament is dwarfed by the profusion of what followed: extracanonical narratives that emerged and continued to bear fruit; pilgrimage, relics, shrines; miracles, visions, amulets; liturgical

[1] Some of this was cited in the two previous Byzantine volumes. The bibliography is vast, and has grown explosively. Representative of the recent surge would be e.g.: S. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016); M. Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009); S. J. Boss (ed.), *Mary: The Complete Resource* (London: Continuum, 2007); A. Remensnyder, *La Conquistadora: The Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and New Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); M. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, vol. 1: *The Lady of the Temple* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2012); K. Nabhan-Warren, *The Virgin of El Barrio: Marian Apparitions, Catholic Evangelizing, and Mexican American Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); R. Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[2] Scholars have long recognised the need to look beyond the history of formal doctrine for work on the Virgin Mary. Consider the still valuable study by H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, first published in 1963 (originally 2 vols., reissued in a single, combined edition: Westminster, MD: Christian Classics/London: Sheed & Ward, 1985).

exaltation, feast days, festivals, daily services, night vigils; aesthetic expression in every kind of medium; intercessory prayers in times of hardship, prayers of thanksgiving or praise – all such activity was to be found in every kind of social location of the Byzantine world: domestic, civic, imperial, monastic, solitary; and regardless of education, gender or social status.

Such ubiquity means that the study of Mary and Marian devotion has as much to teach us about social history, political economies, cultural changes or continuities, constructions of power, gender and sexuality, or cultural codes for moral and ethical formation as it does about matters of religion, religious practices, expression and order, ecclesiastical or theological developments or controversies. As religious studies theorist Robert Orsi has observed, Mary – as a phenomenon – simply cannot be contained within institutional or doctrinal confines. The abundance of her presence demands our attention:

> Mary is a cultural figure not simply in the sense that she 'reflects' cultural idioms or social dynamics (although she does) or that the idioms or lineaments of Marian piety are inherited generationally (which they are). She is a cultural figure in that she enters the intricacies of a culture, becomes part of its webs and meanings, limitations, structures, and possibilities. She contributes to making and sustaining culture, and reinventing it, at the same times that she herself is made and sustained by culture, in dynamic exchanges with her devout.[3]

The present volume seeks to provide clarity of focus and breadth of consideration with respect to the Byzantine material. In fact, Mary in Byzantium still eludes the possibility of a comprehensive volume.[4] The need for new critical editions, translations and scholarly analysis is repeatedly evident in these collected studies (see especially Olkinuora, Krueger, Shoemaker, Iverites, Cunningham and Constas), as it had been in the prior two volumes. But the present volume, like its predecessors, rewards far beyond its size, given the wealth of material it opens.

With this volume, we see two fundamental truths about the medieval Byzantine world. One is that the Middle Byzantine period was a time of vibrancy and dynamic creativity, expressed in any number of media, across an array of contexts, at every corner of Byzantine society. The second is that

[3] R. Orsi, 'The Many Names of the Mother of God', in his *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 48–72, at 61.

[4] Rubin, *Mother of God*, includes some attention to Eastern Christianity and to Byzantium in particular, but the real attention and strength of the volume lie in its presentation of Western Christianity.

the Byzantines found in Mary an ever-present, ever-powerful reality. For the devotee who wore her image, or sang in dialogue with her, or carried dust or holy oil from her shrines, or laboured to write a better biography, or who stood before her icon with tears of need, or who rejoiced on her feast days, Mary was present. She was not only in their imaginations, in their hearts and minds; she was not only metaphorically or instinctively or emotionally or intellectually understood. Mary was right there.[5]

Much work remains if we are to fully grasp the Mother of God in Byzantine history. With the rich material and insights of the present volume, as from its predecessors, we find ourselves well on our way, wisely and fruitfully guided.

[5] Orsi, 'Many Names', argues that the 'abundant presence' of the divine in the mundane life of the believer – exquisitely evident in the nature of Marian devotion – presents the real challenge for scholars of history and religion to address adequately. See now R. A. Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), which includes much focus on Mary, albeit in Western contexts.

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